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**Vichy on film: the portrayal in documentary propaganda of
life under Occupation, 1940-1944**

by

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in French

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List of abbreviations

ACE: Alliance Cinématographique Européenne

AM: *Actualités Mondiales*

BDIC: Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine

CDJC: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine

COIC: Comité d'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique

CGQJ: Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives

CNC: Centre national de la cinématographie

FA: *France-Actualités*

FAPG: *France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont*

INA: Institut National de l'Audiovisuel

LVF: Ligue des Volontaires français contre le bolchévisme

ORAFF: Office de répartition de l'affichage français

PPF: Parti Populaire Français

SGI: Secrétariat Général à l'Information

STO: Service du Travail Obligatoire

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

During four years of Vichy rule and German Occupation, French cinema audiences were exposed to a multiplicity of filmed propaganda. Documentary films formed an important part of the cinema experience in the dark years, and from March 1943 were made obligatory in cinemas across the entire French nation. The documentaries produced, commissioned, funded and sanctioned by the cinema section of the Vichy propaganda ministry, the *Secrétariat Général à l'Information* (SGI), were, though, distinct from any other propaganda produced by the Vichy authorities. Far from promoting exclusionary and potentially divisive themes like anti-Semitism and collaboration, Vichy documentary films throughout all four years of Occupation projected an image of life under Pétain which was frequently idealised and represented a more moderate approach than that taken in radio or poster propaganda. Drawing on themes which had been the subject of popular support before the Occupation, in particular the family, the Empire and French international standing, along with popular symbols like the *tricolore* and the *Marseillaise*, these films ignored the upheavals of the defeat and *exode* of June 1940 and instead seemed to suggest that life continued as it had done before the creation of the Vichy regime.

This thesis examines for the first time the continuity of themes from before the Occupation in Vichy documentary film and investigates why documentaries were so distinct from the content and approach of other Vichy-produced propaganda, especially radio and posters. By examining career trajectories and interests of those responsible for documentary production, the thesis sheds new light on the motivations of Vichy's functionaries. The close examination of the nature of the themes and values from before the Occupation conveyed in Vichy documentary film therefore advances our knowledge regarding the competing ideas and interests at work in the dark years of Occupation.

INTRODUCTION

OVER four years of Occupation and Vichy rule, French cinema audiences were exposed to an abundance of filmed propaganda. Between 1940 and 1944, at least five hundred documentary films were produced in France,¹ and a different newsreel was produced by the Vichy authorities every week.² It was impossible to visit the cinema without first sitting through the dual dosage of newsreel and documentary film before the main feature: fines were introduced from July 1941 to prevent the audience from leaving their seats and ensure a captive audience for Vichy's propaganda film.³ At a time when cinema ticket sales were at an all-time high, with 304.5 million tickets sold across France in 1943,⁴ film represented the ideal medium through which to communicate with the French people.

The examination of propaganda film in France under Vichy rule is especially important for modern understanding of Pétain's state. Not only does the sheer scale of Vichy cinematographic propaganda reveal much about the importance placed on propaganda, and the cinema, by the Vichy authorities, but the content of the documentary films produced by the Vichy authorities offers a new insight into the wider interests and ideals at work under Vichy. Where posters and radio propaganda in particular widely promoted the exclusionary and divisive ideals and policies of the National Revolution, documentary film maintained a broad approach on everyday life and in particular on themes and symbols which were the subject of widespread political and public support before the Occupation. From the importance of increasing the birth-rate, and protecting traditional family values, to the continued need to protect the Empire in line with the *mission civilisatrice*, themes which were broadly popular in the late 1930s continued to appear in documentary film. By contrast, the realities of the Occupation and Vichy rule were widely ignored in these films: anti-Semitism, for example, which was arguably one of the most significant aspects of the

¹ See Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology and Public Opinion under Vichy: the case of *La France en Marche*,' in *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring 2004, p.422

² See the 'sommaries' of reports from the two Vichy newsreels, *France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont (FAPG)* and *France-Actualités*, held at the Archives Nationales (henceforth AN) F42 119

³ See for example Brett Bowles, p.439

⁴ See for example Olivier Barrot and Raymond Chirat, *La vie culturelle dans la France occupée* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009) p.88

National Revolution, and has since played a significant role in defining modern understanding of the ‘dark years,’⁵ was consistently overlooked. Just one Vichy-produced documentary, an extended edition of the *France-Actualités* newsreel, explicitly records anti-Semitic ideals.⁶

The image of the Vichy regime conveyed in its own documentary film is therefore at odds with the messages disseminated through other propaganda, and indeed many of the policies of the Occupation. The portrayal of all aspects of life under Occupation in Vichy documentary film, and the continuity in these films of themes and symbols which were widely supported by the French public in the 1930s, is the subject of this thesis. The presence of these largely consensual themes with connections to life before the Occupation, in fact, underlines the extent to which the Vichy regime was a complex grouping of competing influences and ideas. Through exploring this phenomenon, this thesis therefore sets out to advance our knowledge of the interests and motivations of Vichy’s propagandists, and their audience, at the time of the Occupation.

Despite the importance of the content of Vichy documentary film for the purposes of examining the ideas and interests at work in France under Vichy, this propaganda has seen very little academic attention and has been consistently side-lined in recent exhibitions on this period of France, most notably in a small exhibition dedicated to the cinema in 1942 held at the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris in August 2012,⁷ in which documentary played a very small part, alongside much larger commemorations of the seventieth anniversary of the *Rafle du Vel d’hiv*, which overlooked documentary film entirely.⁸ What little academic attention this material has received from Francophone and Anglophone specialists has also tended to focus on other aspects of Vichy documentary film, and has often stressed the

⁵ See for example Michael Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995) pp.3-21 ; Julian Jackson, *France the Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: OUP, 2001) pp.14-16

⁶ *Une Volonté nous appelle* (Dir: Unknown, 1943)

⁷ ‘Cinéma: l’année 1942,’ Exhibition held at the Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris, April-August 2012

⁸ For example ‘C’était des enfants, l’exposition des enfants juifs de l’hôtel de ville de Paris,’ June-October 2012

promotion of a 'new' order in this material. Indeed, confined to a handful of pioneering specialists in France,⁹ the UK¹⁰ and the USA,¹¹ early studies of this propaganda film have largely concentrated on the presence of themes which promoted the distinction between Vichy and the past.

While each major study has acknowledged the presence of themes in documentary film which represent a more consensual side to the National Revolution, they have not considered in detail the importance of the continuity of themes from before the Occupation, nor offered a thorough comparison with other propaganda media. This thesis therefore contributes to the wider understanding of the Vichy regime not only in its examination of the maintenance of themes from before the Occupation in documentary film, but also through contrasting these films with radio and the cinema, and in the concluding chapter, documentaries with newsreel film to further our understanding of the motivations and ideals of Vichy's filmmakers.

i. Situating Vichy documentary film in the wider context

The case for examining the continuity of themes from before the Occupation in documentary film is clear. The Vichy authorities were unique in Occupied Europe for the autonomy they enjoyed with regards to filmed propaganda. While other countries were obliged to screen a local version of the German-produced *Auslandstonwoche*,¹² the Vichy authorities were permitted to launch not just one, but two newsreel series over the course of the Occupation

⁹ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les Documenteurs des années noires* (Paris: Nouveau Monde Éditions, 2004); Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, 'Encadrer et contrôler le documentaire de propagande sous l'Occupation,' in *Vingtième siècle*, No.63, 1999, pp.23-49; Jean Gili, 'Les journaux d'actualités cinématographiques de 39 à 44' in *Cahiers de la Cinémathèque*, 8 (1973); Max Pesvner, 'Les actualités cinématographiques de 1940 à 1944' in *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, 64 (1966)

¹⁰ Steve Wharton, *Screening Reality: French Documentary Film during the German Occupation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006)

¹¹ Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', *op cit.*; Brett Bowles, 'Accommodating Vichy: the Politics of Marcel Pagnol's *La Fille du puisatier*,' in *Historical Reflections*, Vol. 35, No.2, June 2009, pp.84-107; Brett Bowles,

'*La Tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir* and the Politics of Filmed News in France, 1940-1944,' in 'Cultural Practices,' special issue of *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 76, No.2, June 2004, pp.347-88; Brett Bowles, 'The Attempted Nazification of French cinema, 1934-1944,' in Roel Vande Winkel and David Welch (Eds.), *Cinema and the Swastika: The International Expansion of Third Reich Cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp.130-145

¹² See for example Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', p.422

and to commission a long-running accompanying documentary series in the form of *La France en Marche*.¹³ Even Denmark under Erik Scavenius, which enjoyed comparable domestic autonomy to that of Pétain's regime and pursued a policy of 'cooperation' with the German occupiers, was not permitted to produce its own domestic newsreel film.¹⁴ Vichy France truly was, then, an exceptional case when it came to cinema propaganda.

Had Vichy not been able to establish a newsreel as early as October 1940, the makers of which later contributed to documentary film in their own right, the regime might never have enjoyed such autonomy, since the Propaganda Abteilung and the German authorities in France were keen to expand the French language version of *Auslandstonwoche*, shown in cinemas across the Occupied Zone under the title of *Actualités Mondiales* from August 1940 until August 1942.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the collective efforts of the largely-inexperienced leadership of the Vichy *Secrétariat Général à l'Information* (SGI),¹⁶ the regime's Propaganda Ministry ensured the establishment of the first Vichy newsreel, with the nationalised studios of Pathé and Gaumont merging to create *France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont* (FAPG).¹⁷ The team behind FAPG produced a different edition of the newsreel for the Unoccupied Zone and North Africa every week from October 1940 until August 1942, when the production was replaced by the joint Franco-German venture *France-Actualités*,¹⁸ which in turn distributed a new weekly edition to cinemas across both zones until August 1944, at the time of the Liberation of Paris. The makers of both newsreel series contributed to documentary film under the Occupation, producing their own stand-alone films in addition to shorter newsreel reports, and it is thus essential to consider how documentary film interacts with Vichy's two newsreels.

¹³ Synopses of *La France en Marche* can be found in file AN F41 368

¹⁴ See for example Bo Lidegaard, *A Short History of Denmark in the 20th Century* (Copenhagen: Gyldenhal, 2009) pp.144-170

¹⁵ See for example Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', p.423. Editions of the *Actualités-Mondiales* are held at the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (henceforth INA) in Paris.

¹⁶ The Vichy propaganda and information ministry went through a series of reforms throughout the Occupation. See Appendix 1 for full details of the organisational structure of the SGI.

¹⁷ Editions of FAPG are held at the Pathé and Gaumont archives in Paris: see Appendix 2 for full details of the archival holdings of newsreel in France.

¹⁸ Editions of *France-Actualités* are held at INA. See Appendix 2 for further details.

Both newsreel series were, in fact, widely backed by the Vichy hierarchy, although they remained the preserve of a small group of filmmakers on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the interest shown in the newsreels by Pierre Laval in particular, in his combined role of Prime Minister and *Ministre de l'Information*, demonstrates the extent to which this film propaganda was deemed to be of importance for the leadership of the *État français*. On two occasions, first during the lifetime of *FAPG*, in his initial period of office under Vichy,¹⁹ and then again following the creation of *France-Actualités*, after his return to power,²⁰ Laval wrote to Prefects and ministerial colleagues to ask for assistance in generating content for the newsreel. While such direct involvement in the management of Vichy newsreel by the head of government appears to have been limited to such rare occurrences, it nevertheless emphasises the importance placed on propaganda by the Vichy authorities, as, indeed, does the significant state funding provided to *FAPG* alone, at some 15 million francs between 1940 and 1941.²¹

Documentary films, the principal subject of this thesis, were not deemed to be any less important during the Occupation. The commissioning of *La France en Marche* at the same time as the establishment of *FAPG* led to a vast number of stand-alone documentary films funded and commissioned by the SGI, especially following the creation of COIC, the *Comité d'organisation de l'industrie cinématographique*, in November 1940.²² The budget for documentary film was, in fact, remarkable: between 1940 and 1943, documentaries received 8.6 million francs of state funding.²³ That this financial backing, alongside Vichy's stake in newsreel production, came at a time of considerable material hardship for the French people, underscores the importance of documentary and newsreel film to the Vichy authorities. Only the Italians ate less than the French in western and central Europe during World War II; even

¹⁹ Memorandum on 'Journal France-Actualités-Pathé,' 18/10/1940, AN F42 119

²⁰ 'France-Actualités, Projet de Lettres à MM. les Préfets, Gouverneurs Généraux et Résidents Généraux,' 05/09/1942, AN F60 300

²¹ Based on 'Ventilation du bilan à fin juin 1941—en 1940 et 1941. Comptes d'exploitation,' 30/06/1941 and 'France-Actualités Pathé-Gaumont, Marseille: Compte d'exploitation au 31 décembre 1941,' 31/12/1941, AN F42 119

²² See for example Steve Wharton, p.31

²³ Steve Wharton, p.206

the Romanians and Bulgarians were better-fed.²⁴ Yet it is clear that for Vichy these films offered significant value as propaganda, according to the definition accepted by most theorists of the term, in that they aimed to influence the thoughts and actions of the audience in order to benefit the interests of the person producing the propaganda, the ‘propagandist,’ or their ‘masters,’²⁵ at a time where the cinema represented a hugely popular pastime. Indeed, as the French flocked to escape the realities of the Occupation, in what Eric Alary has described as ‘[un] besoin d’oublier, qui la présence allemande, qui les pénuries, qui le froid d’hiver,’ the Vichy authorities assigned significant material resources to meet this demand in their propaganda film.²⁶

Produced by a curious mélange of semi-professional and professional filmmakers and marketing specialists, many of these documentary films gained considerable financial support in their own right and were often directed or produced by figures with either close attachment to the production of Vichy newsreel or to the SGI’s *Direction du Cinéma*. These propaganda films, in both documentary and newsreel form, were, indeed, unique amongst forms of Vichy propaganda. Not only did they benefit from huge financial subsidies at a time of material hardship, but they also represented an obligatory part of a visit to the cinema, and thus were shown to a captive audience, from July 1941 for the *FAPG* newsreel, and from March 1943 for all documentaries.²⁷ These films also maintained an approach which included moderate themes from before the Occupation throughout the four years of Vichy rule, including in the final edition of *France-Actualités*, released just one week before the Liberation.²⁸

²⁴ Ian Ousby, *Occupation: The Ordeal of France, 1940-1944* (London: Pimlico, 1997) p.118

²⁵ See for example Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Sage, 2011) p.3; Philip Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the ancient world to the present day* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) p.7

²⁶ Eric Alary, Bénédicte Vergez-Chignon and Gilles Gauvin, *Les Français au Quotidien, 1939-1949* (Paris: Perrin, 2006) p.149

²⁷ This was followed-up by a series of memoranda on ‘La distribution des films d’intérêt national,’ for example memorandum of 10/05/1940, AN F41 83

²⁸ ‘Édition du 18 août 1944,’ in *France-Actualités*, 18/08/1944, INA AFE 86004392

This was simply not the case, though, for either poster or radio propaganda produced by the Vichy authorities. The content of posters was, with a handful of exceptions, closer to the reality of the National Revolution, especially with regards to Vichy's discriminatory measures on explicitly racial grounds in the form of anti-Semitism, than the majority of documentary film. The state radio station, Radio-Vichy, or Radio-nationale, also broadcast increasingly anti-Semitic programmes as the Occupation developed, including a weekly slot under the then-head of the Vichy *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives* (CGQJ), Louis Darquier de Pellepoix.²⁹ Under Philippe Henriot's tenure as *Secrétaire Général à l'Information*,³⁰ there was also an increase in collaborationist content, while local radio experienced a similar exposure to themes which were linked to the exclusionary realities of the Vichy years, especially anti-Semitic ideals and policies. Posters, while ubiquitous throughout the Occupation, were nonetheless not forced upon a captive audience in the same way as documentary, and indeed newsreel, film. Audiences could likewise choose to ignore Vichy radio programmes in a way that they could not ignore documentary film under the rules introduced by the SGI to govern the programming of cinema screenings. The promotion of exclusionary and potentially divisive themes in radio and poster propaganda under Vichy does, in fact, underline the uniqueness of Vichy documentary film in eschewing such themes in favour of a more consensual portrayal of daily life under Pétain. If there is a clear necessity to examine Vichy documentary film because of the importance of this material to the Vichy leadership and because of the unique autonomy enjoyed by the Vichy authorities in the realm of propaganda film, this material must therefore also be explored because of its sustained emphasis on themes from before the Occupation and its oversight of more exclusionary and indeed sometimes racial legislation.

²⁹ Memorandum from Darquier de Pellepoix, 10/10/1942, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (henceforth CDJC), LXXIII-22/CCXXXVIII-190

³⁰ On Henriot's speeches, see for example Kay Chadwick (Ed.), *Philippe Henriot. The Last Act of Vichy: Radio Broadcasts, January-June 1944* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011)

ii. Themes of Vichy documentary film

This phenomenon, in fact, has the potential to reveal much about the nature of the motivations and ideals of Vichy's propagandists. The debate around the political nature of the Vichy regime has been long, originating shortly after the Liberation and continuing until the present day. While it has been widely acknowledged that Vichy did not represent a stand-alone regime with no historical roots or precedents,³¹ there are still questions over the precise political motivations of Pétain's state, especially its connections to fascism, although most recent historians have tended to conclude that Vichy was not fascist in nature.³² The promotion of themes and symbols that were the subject of widespread public support before the Occupation in the projection of life under Occupation in Vichy documentary reveals that such themes held some influence over those responsible for Vichy film propaganda.

The nature of these themes and symbols is also especially informative for the purposes of understanding more about the political influences and outlook of those working for and living under the Vichy regime. The themes which feature in this propaganda revolve above all around everyday life, and exclude ideals which were potentially divisive or which were overtly political. For a wide spectrum of the French people, cutting across class and social divisions, these themes no doubt offered reminders of some aspects of 'normal' everyday life from before the Occupation through preserving dominant patriotic and traditional values. By contrast, racial discrimination, which fed into discriminatory legislation around protecting the liberal professions from foreign workers before the war,³³ but which lacked the same mass support as the patriotic promotion of the French nation, is largely ignored. In the same way, while some of the themes which did feature in these films were subject to legislation in the late 1930s, under the Third Republic, others lacked any significant political connections. Where, for example, the defence of the Empire and the *mission civilisatrice*

³¹ See in particular Gérard Noiriel, *Les Origines Républicaines de Vichy* (Paris: Hachette, 1999)

³² For a thorough discussion of this debate, see Nimrod Amzalak, *Fascists and Honourable Men: Contingency and choice in French Politics, 1918-1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp.9-18

³³ See for example Donna Evleth, 'The Ordre des Médecins and the Jews in Vichy France, 1940-1944', in *French History*, Vol. 20 No. 2, June 2006, pp.204-224

was shored up by legislation in the 1930s that banned some local opposition groups and reinforced the importance of the maintenance of French colonial values,³⁴ the wider theme of patriotism was not subject to the same political wrangling; traditional family values were enshrined in the pre-war Daladier Family Code,³⁵ but French military prowess and the maintenance of rural traditions did not feature in pre-Occupation legislation. These themes, in fact, while popular before the Occupation, were also in some ways detached from the political crises of the 1930s and focussed more on a broader sense of the importance of French national standing and of wider patriotic sentiments. The lack of political connections to some of the themes that feature in Vichy documentary and newsreel film in fact raises some important questions about the interests of Vichy's filmmakers—and by extension—their audiences and the particular context of the cinema: questions which are addressed in this thesis.

iii. Originality

The thesis makes an original contribution to our understanding of the Vichy regime in two ways. First, it examines the continuity of themes from before the Occupation in Vichy documentary film, and is the first study to do so in depth. Indeed, while other historians have previously examined elements of inclusion in documentary film, in what Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit describes as 'une propagande d'intégration',³⁶ this thesis explores why documentary film maintained this approach throughout the Occupation, while also comparing the content of these films with other propaganda media. Through examining the portrayal of life under Occupation in documentaries with special reference to aspects of continuity with life before the Occupation, the thesis makes a second significant contribution to the wider understanding of the dark years, in that it furthers our comprehension of the competing influences and interests at work under Vichy. The examination of the portrayal of life under Occupation in propaganda film, in fact, offers a new insight into the interests and

³⁴ See for example Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: OUP, 2012) p.70

³⁵ See for example Julian Jackson, pp.103-104

³⁶ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les Documenteurs des années noires*, p.75

motivations of Vichy propagandists and their audiences at a time of significant political upheaval.

iv. Research questions

The examination of the portrayal of life under Occupation in Vichy documentary film in this thesis is therefore shaped by a number of principal research questions:

- Why did themes from before the Occupation feature in Vichy documentary film?
- Why do these themes feature in Vichy documentary film but not in other forms of media?
- Why are documentary films so different to radio and poster propaganda?
- To what extent was the portrayal of life under Occupation in documentary film shaped by the context of the cinema?
- What were the motivations of the people responsible for making this propaganda?
- What does the continuity of themes from before the Occupation tell us about the wider interests and ideals of the filmmakers?

v. Methodology

This thesis takes an empirical approach to examine the portrayal of life under the Occupation in these documentary films, building on the approach taken by authors of existing studies. It examines film in order to advance our understanding of the wider ideals and interests of the French people under the Occupation, in particular the makers of Vichy documentary film and their audiences. The thesis therefore takes a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on aspects of History, Film Studies and French Studies. In examining the content of the films, especially the portrayal of everyday life under the Occupation, and thus the presence of themes from before the Occupation, the thesis also investigates the techniques employed by filmmakers, including the use of camera angles, the role of the narrator, the use of music and the ‘staging’ of the films, especially the use of professional

and amateur actors. The thesis draws widely on archival material to support its examination of the representation of everyday life in this propaganda film, drawing in particular on the archives of the SGI at the *Archives nationales*³⁷ and records at both the Institut national de l'audiovisuel and the Centre national de la cinématographie. The reception of these films is also considered briefly, drawing on the archives of the Parisian Préfecture de Police,³⁸ and the thesis also utilises the archives of the Minister of the Interior, and in particular the *Synthèses* of the Prefects across France,³⁹ to investigate the discrepancies between the promotion of everyday life in these films and the realities of public opinion towards the Vichy regime, its ideals and legislation. In addition to examining the discrepancies between public opinion and the messages conveyed in these films, the thesis also draws comparisons between Vichy documentary film and Vichy-produced propaganda, especially radio and posters, while also comparing Vichy film to contemporary films produced in other European countries, notably Germany and Great Britain. These comparisons enable the thesis to explore in more detail the motivations and interests of the French people under Vichy rule.

The corpus of the thesis is thus comprised of documentary films produced, sanctioned, commissioned or funded by the Vichy regime. This excludes any films made in Germany or otherwise sponsored, sanctioned or produced by the Nazis, but does include *France-Actualités*, for which the majority of spending, at sixty per cent, came from Vichy.⁴⁰ While the Vichy regime was reliant on the Germans for the supply of raw materials, including film, COIC and the SGI retained a level of autonomy over propaganda film throughout the Occupation which conserved the division between Vichy film and French-language film funded by the Germans.⁴¹ Indeed, despite collaboration at all levels, including in the production of the *France-Actualités* newsreel, Vichy film remained different in style and

³⁷ Especially files in the AN 'F' Information Series

³⁸ Archives de la Préfecture de Police (henceforth APP) especially series Fonds 'Situation de Paris.'

³⁹ Recorded by the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent (henceforth IHTP), Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), Paris

⁴⁰ See letter confirming German funding for *France-Actualités* from Otto Abetz, German Ambassador in France, to Fernand de Brinon, Vichy's 'Ambassador' to the Occupied Zone, dated 30/06/1942. AN F42 119

⁴¹ See for example Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les Documenteurs des années noires*, p.38

approach from German-funded films. This division between Vichy and German film existed even in the programming of films: Vichy documentary was not normally shown at the same time as German-funded documentary, since restrictions on film, especially after 1942, meant that cinemas could only show the newsreel, one documentary film and the feature film, preventing the accompaniment of a German-funded short film alongside Vichy documentaries.⁴²

The distribution and location of production of these films has not been considered as a factor when selecting this sample. Instead, German-funded films made in the Unoccupied Zone are excluded on the basis of their funding, not the location of their production. By contrast, some films, like *France-Actualités*, which were produced in Paris, are included in the corpus of the thesis on the basis of their sponsorship and sanctioning by the Vichy authorities. This thesis cannot pretend to analyse *every* documentary film and newsreel produced, commissioned, sanctioned or funded by the Vichy authorities, but it draws on a corpus of forty documentary films,⁴³ of which twelve are examined in detail in the course of the thesis. These twelve films have been selected for examination in this thesis because they each promote in detail themes from before the Occupation and because they enable a thorough analysis of the techniques and content of Vichy documentary film throughout the four years of Vichy rule. These films also reflect the wider corpus of documentary film under Vichy and in particular the portrayal of consensual themes in line with bourgeois values. Indeed, the similarity between the films discussed in the thesis and the wider corpus of films viewed but not included in the thesis is witnessed in the extent to which themes like the Empire and the family reoccur throughout the entire corpus of Vichy documentary film. The emphasis on the loyalty of the colonised population in the Empire, and the efforts made by the French authorities to maintain French control overseas, in line with the *mission civilisatrice*, which is a strong feature of the films discussed in the thesis, is echoed in, for example *La Garde de*

⁴² *Ibid*, p.62

⁴³ The full details of these films are reproduced in the filmography

*l'Empire, de l'Atlantique au Tchad*⁴⁴ and *Vision saharienne*,⁴⁵ which are not discussed here for reasons of space and time. To enable a comparison throughout the thesis, and especially in the final concluding chapter, fifty newsreel reports have also been examined.

vi. Thesis outline

The thesis begins in chapter one by identifying the makers of Vichy documentary film, and their supervisors at the SGI, and then examines their career trajectories. The chapter investigates the background of these men, and very few women, for traces of political connections, of attachment to the Vichy regime and its leadership, and for evidence of experience in making filmed propaganda. The chapter then turns to the handful of men in charge of commissioning and approving documentary and indeed newsreel film at the SGI and COIC, again examining their career trajectories for evidence of political motivations and evidence of experience in producing or managing propaganda. Having identified the makers of Vichy film propaganda and their immediate supervisors, the chapter explores the interests of these filmmakers before the Occupation, and contrasts these with the themes that featured in their subsequent films.

Building on the examination of the career trajectories of these filmmakers, the thesis then turns to how these men and women portrayed everyday life in their films. Chapter two investigates the representation of life under the Occupation in documentary film in the first two years of Vichy rule. It begins with Jean Coupan's 1940 documentary *Dakar*,⁴⁶ released in the aftermath of the national upheaval of the *exode*, before then moving onto 1941, a year of increased collaboration between the French and Vichy authorities. The chapter examines in detail *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*,⁴⁷ *Méditerranée/Niger*⁴⁸ and *Jeunes de France*,⁴⁹ while also offering a shorter examination of *Fidélité*.⁵⁰ The chapter then

⁴⁴ *La Garde de l'Empire, de l'Atlantique au Tchad* (Dir : Unknown, 1942)

⁴⁵ *Vision saharienne* (Dir : Unknown, 1941)

⁴⁶ *Dakar* (Dir: Jean Coupan, 1940)

⁴⁷ *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* (Dir: Philippe Este, 1941)

⁴⁸ *Méditerranée/Niger* (Dir: Unknown, 1941)

⁴⁹ *Jeunes de France* (Dir: Philippe Este, 1941)

moves on to consider documentary film in 1942, the year in which the entire nation was occupied, and a period of increasingly exclusionary policies and initiatives introduced by the Vichy regime in collaboration with the Germans, culminating in the mass round-ups of the *Rafle du Vel d'hiv*. The chapter therefore examines the portrayal of everyday life in films produced in this climate of increasing repression and exclusion, examining in detail *Le Jardin sans fleurs*⁵¹ and *Nourrir la France*,⁵² while also offering a shorter examination of *Travail*.⁵³

Having examined how everyday life was portrayed in the first two years of the Occupation, chapter three of the thesis moves on to 1943, the year in which the widely unpopular *Service du Travail Obligatoire* was introduced and in which Vichy's paramilitary police, the *Milice*, was created, damaging public support for the regime. The chapter therefore examines the portrayal of everyday life in this highly collaborationist climate, taking in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*,⁵⁴ *Le Culte des héros*⁵⁵ and *Chefs de demain*.⁵⁶ Chapter four then considers how documentary film portrayed everyday life in the final year of the Occupation, 1944, when the Vichy regime had lost any remaining political autonomy and at a time of highly repressive action against the Resistance. The chapter examines in detail the portrayal of life under Pétain in the extended edition film, *Une Page d'Histoire- les 88 ans de Pétain*.⁵⁷

The conclusion to the thesis draws together its findings and thus anticipating areas of future study. The conclusion offers overall reasons for the appearance of more moderate themes from before the Occupation in documentary film and seeking to explain why these films are so different from other forms of contemporary propaganda. The conclusion thus seeks to bring together the major discoveries of the thesis, developing strong hypotheses regarding

⁵⁰ *Fidélité* (Dir: Yves Naintré, 1941)

⁵¹ *Le Jardin sans fleurs* (Dir: Louis Merlin, 1942)

⁵² *Nourrir la France* (Dir: Jean Masson, 1942)

⁵³ *Travail* (Dir: Jean Morel, 1942)

⁵⁴ *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* (Dir: Henri Clerc, 1943)

⁵⁵ *Le Culte des héros* (Dir: Louis Merlin, 1943)

⁵⁶ *Chefs de demain* (Dir: René Clément, 1943)

⁵⁷ *Une Page d'Histoire- les 88 ans de Pétain* (Dir: Unknown, probably Maurice Touzé, 1944)

the motivations of the people making these films and therefore throwing new light on the interests of Vichy's propagandists—and by extension—their audiences. In so doing, the thesis thereby answers some important questions, and poses further ones, concerning the everyday experiences of the French people in the dark years.

CHAPTER I

Tracing trajectories: the makers of Vichy documentary film

AS the French public of the Unoccupied Zone flocked to the cinema in November 1940, the first in the *France en Marche* series of documentary films, detailing life in the Senegalese capital of Dakar, entered circulation. Following the upheaval and disruption of the *exode* of June 1940, in which some six million French people had taken to the roads to flee the German invaders,¹ the appearance of documentaries on screens across the Unoccupied Zone marked something of a return to the typical pre-war French cinema experience. Like newsreels, which had been shown in France since before the Popular Front era,² documentaries were a well-established part of the cinema experience;³ for audiences in November 1940, then, their screening before the feature film was not out of the ordinary. Yet the history of filmed news and documentary film in France was far from straightforward. Although such films were widely shown before the Occupation, the French collectively were ill-prepared for the era of mass propaganda that characterised the Second World War.

Documentary films, in fact, had a history before the Occupation of conveying educational and broadly factual information with little political content.⁴ At the same time, the men, and few women, responsible for making documentary, and indeed newsreel, film in France under Vichy rule came from a diverse mixture of professional backgrounds: some were marketing specialists, others had been makers of newsreel in the years before the Occupation, while others still had no prior experience whatsoever in filmmaking. Why, then, did this eclectic mélange of men and women find themselves directing, filming, producing or otherwise engaging with the state-commissioned or state-sanctioned documentary films over the four

¹ See for example Hanna Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler: France 1940* (Oxford: OUP, 2007) p.150

² See for example Brett Bowles, “‘La Tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir’ and the Politics of Filmed News in France, 1940-1944,” p.351

³ See for example Steve Wharton, p.24

⁴ *Ibid*

years of the Occupation? How did these men and women set about making the official film propaganda of the Vichy regime?

This chapter examines the people behind the documentary films that are discussed in subsequent chapters. It examines how the history of filmed news and documentary film in France can explain the appointment of these filmmakers by the Vichy authorities, before then examining in detail the career trajectories of these filmmakers. The chapter asks whether these filmmakers can be considered as ‘propagandists’ and investigates their political connections and links to their supervisors at the Vichy SGI. The chapter then investigates how the previous experiences of these men and women reflect the broad themes which appeared in their portrayal of everyday life under the Occupation. Through identifying the men and women behind this material, their career trajectories and their possible links to the themes that later featured in their Vichy-backed films, this chapter provides the analytical grounding to examine in subsequent chapters why everyday life is portrayed in a more consensual way in this propaganda film.

i: Making political film. The history of cinematographic propaganda in France before the Occupation

The popularity of the cinema as a means of entertainment in France was firmly established by the time of the Vichy regime, witnessed in particular by the commercial success of 1930s fiction films.⁵ Despite the financial crises of the late 1920s and mid-1930s, in fact, box office receipts for the cinema increased by 280% between 1925 and 1935.⁶ As well as an opportunity to relax, the cinema was comparatively inexpensive when compared to other forms of entertainment, notably the theatre. Having been pioneered by the Lumière brothers for the purpose of ‘recording’ events, the cinema in France and internationally shifted towards variously more realistic and more fictitious portrayals of different subjects by the

⁵ See for example Guy Austin, *Contemporary French Cinema: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) pp.8-9

⁶ See Colin Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema, 1939-1960* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997) p.9

1930s.⁷ Fiction film and documentary thus developed simultaneously: some filmmakers chose to make more artistic film, where others '[shifted] the attention of their lenses towards advocating change in the system, for the education and benefit of the masses, by bringing to their attention hitherto ignored events and circumstances.'⁸ This educational strand of the cinema was taken up by French filmmakers more inclined towards the didactic potential of the medium than the possibilities of the purely artistic and fictional. Despite the efforts of the *Service Cinématographique de l'Armée* (SCA) in World War I, which, as it did in 1939-1940, provided images of the front to boost morale,⁹ in Steve Wharton's assessment, documentary in France 'continued its more "traditional" role of lyrical chronicler.'¹⁰ Where the makers of fiction film in the 1930s were drawing increasingly on nuanced means of producing film, prompting the release of big-budget, highly professional and sometimes politicised films such as *La Grande Illusion*¹¹ and *La Vie est à nous!*¹² the makers of French documentary film gained a reputation for essentially 'educational' film which combined a focus on largely scientific topics with a desire to record events and life for the camera.¹³ When compared to fiction film, some of which, like Renoir's *La Vie est à nous!* was financed by political parties, in this case by the Parti communiste français (PCF), as part of the Popular Front's electoral campaign,¹⁴ documentary film was seen more as apolitical, even if some political movements and parties also produced short, non-fiction film in the 1930s.¹⁵ Indeed, documentary film before the war was, on the whole, in keeping with the assessment of the British documentary maker John Grierson that: 'The documentary film

⁷ Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the non-fiction film* (Oxford: OUP, 1993) p.8

⁸ Steve Wharton, p.23

⁹ See Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', p.424

¹⁰ Steve Wharton, p.24

¹¹ *La Grande Illusion* (Dir: Jean Renoir, 1937)

¹² *La vie est à nous!* (Dir: Jean Renoir, 1936)

¹³ Steve Wharton, p.24

¹⁴ See for example Martin O'Shaughnessy, *Jean Renoir* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) p.116

¹⁵ This was the case, for example, with Colonel de la Rocque's Parti Social Français. See for example *Réunion du PSF en plein air à Lille* (Dir: Unknown, ca.1938), held at the CNC.

was conceived and developed [...] as an instrument to be used systematically in all fields of public instruction and enlightenment.’¹⁶

Newsreel film, which became a recognised feature of cinema programmes in France in the mid-1930s, experienced a similar trend. Largely popular amongst cinema audiences,¹⁷ newsreel presented broadly factual accounts of recent events and news, reflecting both Grierson’s notion of ‘enlightenment’ and the desires of some documentary makers to record contemporary events. Like documentary film, newsreel was exposed to very little political involvement until the Daladier era, where it was harnessed to promote the Munich accords.¹⁸ Instead, the French pre-war newsreels of Pathé, Gaumont, Éclair and the American imports of Fox and Paramount¹⁹ were free largely to pursue news items as they saw fit; in any case, the government had lacked any formal organisational structures for controlling filmed news until the arrival of Daladier, who formally created the *Commissariat Général à l’Information* in July 1939, under the control of the writer Jean Giradoux.²⁰ Despite previous efforts to try to gain some governmental control over the film industry, including a report submitted by Guy de Carmoy under the Popular Front,²¹ no such structures existed until Giradoux’s appointment. Newsreels, documentary and fiction film were thus not formally subjected to governmental scrutiny before the late 1930s, considerably later than was the case in other European countries, notably Britain, which had been slower to establish a Ministry of Information than the French,²² but had provided funding and resources to the General Post Office Film Unit since 1933,²³ and in Germany, where the Nazis, under Goebbels, controlled

¹⁶ John Grierson, ‘Documentary: The Bright Example,’ in Forsyth Hardy (Ed.), *Grierson on Documentary* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966) p.189

¹⁷ See Brett Bowles, “‘La Tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir’ and the Politics of Filmed News in France, 1940-1944,’ p.351

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ The SGI compiled a report on the pre-war status of French newsreel. See ‘Note sur la participation éventuelle d’Éclair Journal à la Société France-Actualités,’ 27/02/1943. AN F42 119

²⁰ See for example Steve Wharton, p.30

²¹ *Ibid*

²² See for example the introduction to the National Archives (NA) catalogue record for the Ministry of Information archives, NA Series INF

²³ See for example Scott Anthony and James G. Mansell (Eds.), *The Projection of Britain: A History of the GPO Film Unit* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) p.5

the film industry from June 1933.²⁴ Mussolini's Italy was likewise quick to formalise state control over the cinema, and especially documentary film, from the spring of 1935.²⁵

Unlike Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, though, successive French governments in the 1930s, until the arrival of Daladier, appear to have suffered both from financial constraints²⁶ and, like the British,²⁷ from an aversion to the notion of propaganda, with its negative connotations of deceit and falsehood. While Goebbels in Germany and Count Ciano in Italy were quite prepared to explicitly embrace the term 'propaganda,' even if Ciano later renamed his ministry to that of 'Popular Culture' in 1937,²⁸ the British and French reluctance to create formally central ministries can arguably be put down to an unwillingness, in Manuela Williams's assessment, 'to be perceived as breaching the traditions and moral principles underpinning democratic societies.'²⁹ The concept of propaganda, despite its original meaning of 'propagating' a message, initially that of the Catholic Church, had, in fact, by the 1930s been tainted by negative perceptions following the mass mobilisation of the printed and audio media in particular during World War I.³⁰ That propaganda had been associated with the destruction of war, and was then so openly embraced by the Nazis and by Mussolini's fascists, combined with the financial precariousness of the French state and French film industry in the 1930s, sheds some light on why France was so slow to utilise documentary film for the purposes of propaganda, according to the definition adopted by most theorists and in this thesis, that is to say the deliberate attempt to change the actions or ideas of the audience in the interests of either the person or group producing the material, or their 'masters.'³¹ However, even if, under Daladier, newsreel film had been harnessed to propagandist ends, or at least for political

²⁴ Ian Garden, *The Third Reich's Celluloid War: Propaganda in Nazi Feature Films, Documentaries and Television* (Stroud: The History Press, 2012) p.18

²⁵ See Manuela A. Williams, *Mussolini's Propaganda Abroad: Subversion in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 1936-1940* (London: Routledge, 2006) p.7

²⁶ Steve Wharton, p.30

²⁷ See for example Manuela A. Williams, p.7

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.8

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.7

³⁰ See for example Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, p.2

³¹ See for example Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, p.3; Philip Taylor, p.7

purposes, to promote the successful signing of the Munich accords, documentary film escaped such governmental intervention, and in any case was widely perceived both as informative³² and ‘educational,’ as France went to war.³³ Likewise, if newsreel had become ‘propagandist’ in nature by the time of the Occupation, it was not viewed as negative or deceitful by French audiences and remained a popular part of the cinema programme.

Even with the production of regular films on the French war effort during the Phoney War by the SCA, which became somewhat propagandist in order to heighten French patriotic sentiment and to promote the efforts of French forces,³⁴ by the fall of France in June 1940, the French had comparatively little experience of making, and of viewing, film propaganda when compared to Germany and Italy, where newsreels and documentary film had been subjected to full governmental scrutiny and utilised for propaganda purposes since the early 1930s.

How, then, can this help to explain the portrayal of daily life in the documentary film of the Vichy regime? The delay in setting up a central French propaganda ministry meant that the French had very little experience of maintaining a consistent ideological line in their film: an equivalent body to COIC simply did not exist before the Occupation and censorship was relatively new, introduced only under Giradoux, who was a writer by trade and not a cinema specialist.³⁵ The lack of substantive state funding for the documentary film industry also meant that the great French filmmakers of the 1930s, including Renoir and Carné, tended to make feature fiction film and not short documentary film or newsreel, thus leaving these films to comparatively less skilled filmmakers. In short, the lack of formal state control and state funding for documentary production before the Occupation meant that the Vichy authorities had few foundations upon which to build a sustainable and effective film propaganda industry. It was this lack of experience in the realm of film propaganda,

³² Brett Bowles, “‘La Tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir’ and the Politics of Filmed News in France, 1940-1944,’ p.351

³³ See Steve Wharton, p.205

³⁴ See for example Brett Bowles, ‘Newsreels, Ideology...,’ p.431

³⁵ Steve Wharton, p.30

combined with the disruption of the *exode* and the loss of much essential equipment and material in the Occupied Zone,³⁶ that shaped the control and production of Vichy documentary film, and thus led to the appointment of Vichy's chosen filmmakers.

ii. Identifying Vichy's filmmakers

The few men and women commissioned or sanctioned to make documentary film under the Vichy regime bore little resemblance to the conventional idea of the 'propagandist' identified by theorists of propaganda, and certainly not to the frequently-cited example of Joseph Goebbels.³⁷ Instead, Vichy's filmmakers, and their supervisors, came from a range of professional backgrounds and were chosen, in many cases, as much for their availability in the Unoccupied Zone than their skill as makers of filmed propaganda. Indeed, few of these people had any experience of actually making any film before the Occupation, let alone producing propaganda capable of changing the audience's actions or beliefs. At best, these men and women could be considered to have gained some experience of making 'white' propaganda before their work for Vichy, that is to say material whose source is easily identified and which conveys generally truthful information, even if such information might be used to increase the standing of those who have commissioned it.³⁸ This was the case, for example, of Philippe Este, the director of *FAPG* and of a series of stand-alone documentary films under Vichy, who had been the pre-Occupation director of Pathé's newsreel which had regularly incorporated reports from the SCA to increase French patriotic sentiment, in the interests of the French war effort and the Daladier government.³⁹ These men and women were certainly not, though, experienced in making 'black' propaganda, which sets out to distort reality, along the lines of that produced and commissioned by Goebbels.⁴⁰ Yet under Vichy, their films combined elements of both 'white' and 'black' propaganda, variously including factual reports and entirely fictitious portrayals of reality, which arguably distorted

³⁶ Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', p.424

³⁷ See for example Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, p.18

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.17

³⁹ 'Le développement prodigieux du Service cinématographique de l'armée,' *La Cinématographie française*, 09/12/1939

⁴⁰ Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, p.18

the truth in order to convey a positive image of daily life under the Occupation. Indeed, the omission of various factual events and government policies and initiatives in these films is considerable; as Steve Wharton has noted, ‘the “veracity” experienced by Vichy audiences was—partially at least—deliberately manipulated.’⁴¹ How and why, then, did these men and women come to make such material?

To some extent, the answer lies in those responsible for commissioning film under Vichy. It is important to note that even the first managers of the cinema section of the SGI, later the Direction du Cinéma, had little experience of filmmaking or indeed of producing propaganda. The first head of the cinema section of the SGI, Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, was a lawyer by trade who had served as a *député* for the Basses-Pyrénées under the Third Republic, with no filmmaking or propaganda experience; he simply happened to have the correct nationalist right-wing credentials to find work at Vichy.⁴² His colleague, Guy de Carmoy, by contrast, had been commissioned by the Popular Front to write the initial report into organising the film industry, and had some experience of filmmaking,⁴³ but also had interests in academia and later wrote articles on foreign policy.⁴⁴ Tixier-Vignancour and de Carmoy were obliged to use any and all resources they had to hand, which included filmmakers. Some important figures of the film industry, like Renoir and the actor Jean Gabin, had left France for Hollywood by the defeat;⁴⁵ Tixier-Vignancour and de Carmoy were thus recruiting from a small pool of filmmaking talent, and certainly not a pool of skilled propagandists, in the summer of 1940. With comparatively little experience of their own, de Carmoy and Tixier were also relying on instinct to determine their criteria for recruiting the makers of filmed propaganda: the combination of few available filmmakers and a relative lack of experience in the SGI cinema team, then, prompted the diverse mixture of personnel that made up Vichy’s chosen filmmakers.

⁴¹ Steve Wharton, p.205

⁴² Brett Bowles, “‘La Tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir’ and the Politics of Filmed News in France, 1940-1944,’ p.351

⁴³ Steve Wharton, p.30

⁴⁴ See for example Guy de Carmoy, ‘The last year of de Gaulle’s foreign policy,’ in *International Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 1969

⁴⁵ See for example Martin O’Shaughnessy, p.9

Such was the diversity of Vichy's filmmakers, in fact, that some of those who found themselves making documentary film under Vichy would simply never have considered themselves to be propagandists, even if their films had met with the approval of the COIC and SGI. Their films featured little or no political content and were largely based on subjects of their interest, including the natural environment: the makers of *Les Eaux du Rhône*, for example, financially backed by the SGI,⁴⁶ arguably would not have seen their film as a piece of propaganda designed to change the actions or thoughts of the audience, but more as an 'educational' report along the lines of pre-war documentary film, even if such a film could be seen to promote the natural world in a positive light. Yet there were others who knew they were producing documentary films that would include elements of propaganda. They included the makers of Vichy's two newsreels, *FAPG* and *France-Actualités* and some directors of Vichy documentary film that were repeatedly commissioned by the SGI. Often the two groups overlapped, with Vichy's newsreel directors and production teams working on short, and sometimes even extended, documentaries over the four years of Occupation, and some makers of Vichy documentaries also working for the Vichy newsreels. The connections between the two groups, in fact, underline the small size of the SGI's recruitment pool, and indeed the autonomy enjoyed by those responsible for propaganda film: unlike poster or radio propaganda, the SGI's cinema section rarely experienced interference from the Vichy hierarchy, with the exception of the two interventions by Laval to put out a call for content for the two newsreels. Indeed, whereas poster and radio propaganda was closely supervised by successive ministers of information,⁴⁷ this was simply not the case for cinema propaganda, allowing for a certain degree of experimentation and new opportunities for filmmakers. The comparative autonomy of the SGI's cinema section, and its filmmakers, when compared to the poster and radio branches of the SGI, which also experienced some interference from government ministers and advisers, including Darquier

⁴⁶ See for example the contract between the SGI and the *Artisans d'art et du cinéma*, 31/10/1942, AN F41 365

⁴⁷ See for example Philippe Amaury, *Les Deux Premières Expériences d'un 'Ministère de l'Information' en France* (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1969), pp.272–277

de Pellepoix's regular memoranda over the content of radio propaganda,⁴⁸ and Dr Ménétrel's control over posters,⁴⁹ should not be underestimated, and will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters for its impact on the portrayal of everyday life in documentary film. Certainly, existing archival evidence demonstrates few interventions from figures like Darquier, a devoted and vitriolic anti-Semite,⁵⁰ aimed at the cinema section of the SGI, which appears to have enabled the successive heads of the cinema section to recruit such a diverse pool of filmmakers.

Who, then, were these men and women? *FAPG* was the SGI's flagship film propaganda production, and in fact benefited from a relatively experienced team: Philippe Este was able to employ some of his former Pathé team, all film professionals who had experience of making filmed news on a mass scale, and under Daladier of making 'white' propaganda in the interests of the French war effort. Alongside Este, the team comprised Louis Métayer, a journalist, the cameramen René Brut and Georges Ansel, the narrator Jacques Breteuil, and the general administrator, Mme Adibert.⁵¹ The SGI also employed Jean Coupan as state censor, a man with no apparent track record of filmmaking, and thus a break with the team's otherwise solid filmmaking credentials.⁵² Coupan had his own filmmaking ambitions, though, and went on to make the inaugural episode of the SGI's *La France en Marche* series, on the French defence of Dakar.⁵³ However, if Coupan was not as experienced as Este and his former Pathé team, the men responsible for producing the rest of *La France en Marche* had gained some experience: one of the producers, André Brouillard, had previously worked for the SCA,⁵⁴ while André Verdet-Kléber, the director, owned Veka films, a production company specialising in documentaries,⁵⁵ and Jacques Berr, the head

⁴⁸ See for example Memorandum from Darquier de Pellepoix, 10/10/1942, CDJC LXXIII-22/CCXXXVIII-190

⁴⁹ See for example Dominique Rossignol, *Histoire de la propagande en France de 1940 à 1944: l'utopie Pétain* (Paris: PUF, 1991) pp.12-25

⁵⁰ See for example Robert O. Paxton, p.176

⁵¹ 'Note concernant *FAPG*,' 16/05/1941, AN F42 119

⁵² Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les Documenteurs des années noires*, p.50

⁵³ *Dakar* (Dir: Jean Coupan, 1940). The film is examined in chapter two.

⁵⁴ Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', p.431

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.426

cinematographer, had gained some experience in pre-war documentary.⁵⁶ In the same way, the man responsible for the commissioning of documentary film from his arrival in post as head of the cinema section of the SGI in September 1941 to his departure in May 1944, Louis-Émile Galey, was a filmmaker by trade.⁵⁷ Galey also combined the post of head of the SGI's cinema section with that of director of COIC from November 1943 until his departure in the final months of the Liberation.⁵⁸

The experience of these men in making film, including for propagandist purposes when working for the SCA or for Pathé's pre-war newsreel under Daladier, outweighed that of other Vichy filmmakers. Louis Merlin, the maker of successive documentaries on the family,⁵⁹ and the long-running Vichy radio programme *L'Alphabet de la famille*,⁶⁰ was a marketing professional with no real experience of filmmaking for political purposes.⁶¹ Likewise, Henri Clerc, the director of *France-Actualités* from its inception until his resignation in March 1944,⁶² was a journalist for *Paris-Soir* and former Radical *député*.⁶³ Despite his presidency of the 'Comité d'attribution des avances du cinéma',⁶⁴ he lacked any previous filmmaking experience. Where René Clément, by contrast, who also worked for the SGI in directing the 1943 *Chefs de demain* documentary film, had gained some experience making films as a member of the *Centre artistique et technique des jeunes du cinéma* (CATJC),⁶⁵ the organism created by Vichy to promote filmmaking, Jean Morel, the man charged with overseeing documentary and newsreel production in the *Service du Cinéma*, and the director of the 1942 film *Travail*, seems to have had no previous experience in

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.449

⁵⁷ See for example Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.22

⁵⁸ See for example Steve Wharton, p.42

⁵⁹ *Première Valse* (Dir: Louis Merlin, 1940); *Le Jardin sans fleurs* (Dir: Louis Merlin, 1942); *Le Culte des héros* (Dir: Louis Merlin, 1943)

⁶⁰ See for example Olivier Barrot and Raymond Chirat, p.79

⁶¹ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.98

⁶² Correspondence between Philippe Henriot and the 'Actionnaires de la société *France-Actualités*,' 25/04/1944 AN F42 119

⁶³ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, "« Les voyages du maréchal » : trois historiens en quête d'images," in *Vingtième siècle: revue d'histoire*, Vol.32, No. 32, 1991, p.87

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁶⁵ Steve Wharton, p.15

making film.⁶⁶ In the same way, Yves Naintré, the director of 1941 documentary *Fidélité*, was the former director of Paramount's newsreel and thus had gained some experience making filmed news for propagandist purposes,⁶⁷ where many of the men who comprised the production team of *France-Actualités*, who made several extended edition, stand-alone documentaries during the Occupation, including three examined in this thesis, came from non-filmmaking backgrounds. Marius Aimot, the deputy director, for example, had previously directed the propaganda of the Parti Populaire Français (PPF) with Paul Marion,⁶⁸ while the team also included Jean Chitry, as Editor-in-Chief of the newsreel from 1943, who had been the former head of press for Air France.⁶⁹ With the exception of those members of the production team who, like Breteuil, René Brut and Georges Ansel made the transition from *FAPG* to *France-Actualités*, and André Dercourt, a former producer for Gaumont,⁷⁰ the senior figures in Vichy's second newsreel were thus from marketing or journalistic backgrounds, while Aimot had experience of making propaganda, but not necessarily films. Indeed, where some greater experience of making filmed news might have come in the form of Philippe Este, who joined the newsreel as a form of consultant shortly before the first edition of *France-Actualités*,⁷¹ this was short-lived: Este was involved in a bitter dispute with his successor, Henri Clerc, in October 1942 and left the newsreel's team.⁷² The team thus relied heavily on the skills of men like Ansel, Brut, Breteuil and Dercourt, who had all worked for Pathé or Gaumont before the war, to provide expertise.

Very few of these men and women had gained experience making films before the Occupation; amongst those who had, though, like Este, Ansel, Brut, Breteuil and Naintré, there was nevertheless some experience of making 'white' propaganda for patriotic means

⁶⁶ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les Documenteurs des années noires*, p.54.

⁶⁷ See correspondence between Naintré and a M. Mourre in the secretariat of the SGI, 20/05/1942, AN F42 125

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.54

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷¹ See 'Liste des personnes de la Société appelées à travailler en zone occupée,' 18/05/1942, AN F42 119

⁷² See correspondence between Louis Métayer and Galey, 18/010/1942 and between Este and Galey, 18/12/1942, AN F42 119

under Daladier during the Phoney War. What is clear is that even if these men and women had not necessarily considered themselves to be typical ‘propagandists,’ in the Goebbels mode, with the possible exception of Aimot through his work at the PPF, they can have been in little doubt that the films they were producing under Vichy were intended as propaganda. From Tixier-Vignancour, who wrote of the need for ‘la propagande cinématographique qui ne serait pas utilisée dans une façon aggressive,’⁷³ to Guy de Carmoy, who recorded that ‘la propagande [doit être] savamment dosée, habillement présentée,’⁷⁴ followed by Louis-Émile Galey’s insistence on ‘le cinéma [comme] outil de propagande de la pensée française,’⁷⁵ and Henri Clerc’s ambitions to make ‘un « bon journal » qui soit en même temps un vrai film,’⁷⁶ the directors of the cinema section of the SGI made the propagandist role of these films explicit. There was frequent correspondence between the cinema section, COIC and filmmakers, as is recorded in existing documentary evidence.⁷⁷ While it appears, from the archival material that has been preserved, that neither the supervisors of propaganda film at the SGI nor the filmmakers themselves appear to have recorded the precise propaganda aims for each film, these men and women, with their diverse backgrounds and varying levels of experience in making film and in making propaganda, were truly ‘propagandists’ under Vichy. They were working for the SGI and COIC to produce propaganda film that did seek, in ways which will be explored in subsequent chapters, to promote a positive version of life under Pétain and which had the potential to influence the thoughts and actions of the audience.

Why, then, is this examination of the career trajectories of these filmmakers, and their supervisors at the SGI, important in the analysis of the portrayal of life under Occupation in these films? The diversity of the career backgrounds of these filmmakers underlines that these men and women were not, with the possible exception of Aimot, hardened

⁷³ ‘Note sur les actualités cinématographiques,’ 03/08/1940, AN F41 368

⁷⁴ Memorandum on cinema propaganda, not dated (before February 1941), AN F42 133

⁷⁵ *Ciné-Mondial*, No.5, 14/11/1941

⁷⁶ Correspondence between Clerc and Louis-Émile Galey, 06/03/1943, AN F42 119

⁷⁷ Especially the AN ‘F’ series

propagandists, nor necessarily skilled filmmakers: they were a heterogeneous group of people with competing motivations and ideals. Their very diversity, in fact, emphasises that these men and women were not automatically ideologically-aligned with the Vichy regime. Indeed, the majority of Vichy's filmmakers, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, appear to have had no great attachment to politics prior to working for the SGI. If Este and his Pathé team had previously incorporated patriotic reports designed to increase pride in the French war effort under Daladier, this was not necessarily an indication of support for the specific ideology of the final governments of the Third Republic. Of the men and women involved with the commissioning, sanctioning or production of the documentary and newsreel film examined in subsequent chapters of this thesis, only Clerc, who had served as a Radical *député* and then moved further to the right under Vichy with active support for collaboration;⁷⁸ Aimot, with his far-right credentials as a propagandist for the PPF; and Tixier-Vignancour, who had served as an independent *député* on a nationalist platform, had any previous track record of political commitment. The variations in the career trajectories of these men and women are important, then, precisely because of what they say about the political connections, or indeed absence thereof, alongside the ideas and motivations, of these men and women. If their prior interests did not necessarily reflect the political nature of the Vichy regime, what were these interests?

iii. Exploring the interests of Vichy's documentary filmmakers

With the exception of Clerc, Tixier-Vignancour and Aimot, little is known about the ideals and interests of these men and women before Vichy. Yet these filmmakers had lived and worked, in one capacity or another, under the Third Republic, and thus their ideals and interests must therefore have been shaped in some way, by that particular historical moment. They also exercised largely middle-class professions before the Occupation—politics, journalism, film production, and marketing, for example—which in turn shaped their interests and ideals. Whilst it is important to acknowledge that cinema audiences under Vichy were

⁷⁸ See Jean-Pierre Bertin-Magit, *Les Documenteurs des années noires*, p.55

not exclusively made up of middle-class viewers, and often reflected the diversity of the population as a whole, given the relatively modest cost of tickets and the efforts to take film out to the countryside, middle-class viewers were nevertheless disproportionately represented in urban areas, as they had been before the Occupation.⁷⁹ To some extent, then, the makers of Vichy documentary had much in common with their viewers: they came from a diversity of professional backgrounds and were not necessarily politically-aligned. Indeed, it seems very likely that the majority of those involved with Vichy documentary and newsreel production, who did not possess any apparent record of political engagement, shared the general disapproval and mistrust of the weak political institutions of the Third Republic expressed by a broad spectrum of the population.⁸⁰ As is explored in more detail in subsequent chapters, there is nothing to suggest in these films that France return to the institutions and constitution of the Third Republic. There is, in fact, something of an oversight of political themes in these documentaries with the overwhelming and sustained focus on an apparently positive version of life under Pétain.

If, like the majority of the French people before the war, those Vichy filmmakers without political track records probably disliked the instability and repeated governmental crises of the 1920s and 1930s, what, then, did they support? While the precise ideals and motivations of these filmmakers are investigated throughout later chapters, it is important to record that the themes which do feature in the portrayal of everyday life in this propaganda film are, on the whole, themes which had been the subject of support amongst the majority of the French people before the Occupation. The maintenance of traditional family values, for example, with a strong birth-rate and the protection of the institution of marriage, alongside the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, was a historical preoccupation of the French middle-classes.⁸¹ That the major moderate political parties each supported Daladier's Family

⁷⁹ See Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma français sous Vichy* (Paris: Éditions Albatros, 1980) p.15

⁸⁰ See for example Robert O. Paxton, p.30

⁸¹ See for example Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: The French, 1799-1914* (London: Penguin, 2008) p.368

Code in 1939 is a measure of the broad importance of such traditional family values;⁸² the PCF also backed such ideals in the late 1930s partly because of the potential offered by such an approach to reach out to and reassure bourgeois voters.⁸³ If to some extent these traditions had also been the preserve of the Catholic Church, which had its own lobbying groups for family values in the 1920s and 1930s,⁸⁴ their appeal nevertheless extended to the non-religious bourgeoisie. Fears of ‘dénatalité’ and the potential threat to French national standing were widely-held before the Occupation; as Miranda Pollard notes, ‘depopulation anxieties served as a mirror for projections of French decline.’⁸⁵ Alongside Catholic lobbying groups were a series of organisations set up to promote traditional family values, including the Liges de Familles Nombreuses and the Confédération Générale des Familles, which incorporated bourgeois members.⁸⁶ While women were involved in these organisations, the majority of these movements, especially the Union Féminine Civique et Sociale, sought to restrict the access of women to the workplace in a reassertion of traditional gender roles; whilst these ideals appealed to those with bourgeois values, then, they appealed in particular to men, and to those women who supported the patriarchal image of ‘la femme au foyer.’⁸⁷

Amongst the dominant social values before the Occupation was also a widespread sense that strong, traditional family units, in which the mother remained at home, could help to increase French national, and even international, standing; as Jackie Clarke has argued, ‘the idea that a well-kept home could exercise a moralising influence on its inhabitants, notably by keeping the man of the house away from alcoholic excess of the café or from other temptations that might lurk outside the home, was well-established in the interwar period.’⁸⁸

⁸² See for example Julian Jackson, pp.103-104

⁸³ See François Delpha et Jean-Gabriel Foucaud, ‘Les Communistes français et la sexualité, 1932-1938,’ in *Mouvement Social*, 91 (April-June 1975), p.142

⁸⁴ Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) p.12

⁸⁵ Miranda Pollard, p.18

⁸⁶ Miranda Pollard, p.12

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁸⁸ Jackie Clarke, *France in the Age of Organization: Factory, Home and Nation from the 1920s to Vichy* (New York: Berghahn, 2011) p.87

Indeed, women who kept a good house ‘would help to produce a generation with the mentality of the engineer.’⁸⁹ French national standing, and engineering, could thus be achieved in part through the maintenance of traditional family values. Despite the introduction of the Daladier Family Code, though, traditional family values were as much ideals and beliefs as legislation before the Occupation; indeed, the protection of the traditional family and the need to increase the birth-rate came more from individuals and associations with little political interest than from the political classes.⁹⁰ As this traditional image of the family, and of the home, was, then, part of the dominant values of French society before Vichy, it seems very likely that Vichy’s comparatively non-political filmmakers shared these ideals.

In the same way, the Empire, and the maintenance of the *mission civilisatrice*, was a theme which received widespread support before the Occupation and represented one of the dominant social values of 1930s bourgeois society. Like traditional family values, while the *mission civilisatrice* was the subject of some political attention, in particular through the suppression of opposition movements in North Africa under Blum, and the failure of the Blum-Violette Bill which might otherwise have given greater voting rights to some Muslim Algerians,⁹¹ the Empire appealed to a broader, base patriotic sentiment that transcended the political sphere. The exportation of ‘civilising’ French values to the colonies, especially the French educational system and French engineering triumphs,⁹² appealed to the patriotism prevalent in 1930s society: in the assessment of Maurice Larkin, the Empire as a whole was a ‘source of reassurance and pride.’⁹³ For Rod Kedward, so wide was the appeal of the Empire that colonial policy before the war ‘was conducted as if it was consciously mapping the centre ground of politics, raising the flag in an area of irrefutable consensus.’⁹⁴ The

⁸⁹ *Ibid*

⁹⁰ See Miranda Pollard, pp.12-13

⁹¹ See for example Gérard Noiriel, *Les Origines Républicaines de Vichy* (Paris: Hachette, 1999) pp.68-69; Martin Evans, pp.62-75

⁹² See for example Rod Kedward, *La Vie en bleu: France and the French since 1900* (London: Penguin, 2007) p.139

⁹³ Maurice Larkin, *France since the Popular Front* (Oxford: OUP, 1997) p.32

⁹⁴ Rod Kedward, p.138

mission civilisatrice was also a clear indication of France's status as an international power, and political interventions, including the Code de l'indigénat,⁹⁵ which affirmed the second-rank status of French colonial subjects, simply added to the wider sense of importance around French national pride. There was, indeed, considerable attention paid by bourgeois activists to the importance of developing strong French engineering infrastructure to boost national standing,⁹⁶ a theme later promoted in Vichy documentary film as signs of French prowess. In the same way, while the emblems of French patriotism, the *tricolore* and the *Marseillaise*, were not necessarily the symbols of the entire French population, since the Communists favoured the red flag and the *Internationale*, they were nevertheless representative of the dominant values of bourgeois society in the 1930s.⁹⁷ It was precisely this sense of patriotism, emphasised in the approval of the *tricolore* and *Marseillaise*, which incited French people of all social classes, led by the dominant bourgeoisie, to support the Empire and wider French achievements.

While, for the most part, little is known about the actual interests of Vichy's documentary filmmakers, their backgrounds as middle-class professionals suggests that they would have shared some of the same preoccupations as other members of the French middle-classes, which (as noted above) made up the majority of urban cinema audiences; preoccupations which revolved in particular around the maintenance and development of French national standing. Without a strong birth-rate, the largely bourgeois inter-war natalist movements reasoned, France would suffer national decline, in the same way inter-war think tanks claimed that without the infrastructure and organisation capable of undertaking French engineering projects, France might fail to develop as a nation.⁹⁸ Finally, without the Empire, France would lose her place on the world stage. These concerns were swelled by the broad

⁹⁵ See for example Martin Evans, p.22

⁹⁶ See for example Jackie Clarke, pp.30-34

⁹⁷ On the *tricolore* see for example Raoul Girardet, 'Les Trois couleurs: ni blanc, ni rouge,' in Pierre Nora (Ed.), *Les Lieux de Mémoire I: La République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984) pp.26-28; on the *Marseillaise*, see 'La Marseillaise,' in Pierre Nora (Ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire I: La République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984) p.126

⁹⁸ See Jackie Clarke, pp.94-95

support for basic patriotic symbols like the *tricolore* and the *Marseillaise* that emphasised French pride and French strength.

It is, though, important to examine the sorts of ideals that did not necessarily form part of the dominant social values of French bourgeois society in the 1930s, and by association that Vichy's filmmakers did not necessarily support. Racial discrimination was a particularly contentious subject in the 1920s and 1930s. While anti-Semitism *was* present in France before the Occupation, it was not a theme that gained such notable support as, for example, the Empire or the need to maintain traditional family values. In part this was because the French traditions of religious tolerance, under the democratic system, were too well-embedded in the minds of the French people for anti-Semitism to be converted into mass support.⁹⁹ The First Republic's offer of French citizenship to Jews in two statutes of 1790 and 1791 eventually led to a situation in which there was no legal distinction amongst French citizens on the basis of religion,¹⁰⁰ and meant that many French people were often unaware of the religion of their neighbours.¹⁰¹ While there were some initiatives in the 1930s by professional bodies in some of the 'liberal' trades, like law, dentistry and medicine, which had anti-Semitic permeations, these were introduced on explicitly xenophobic, rather than racial, grounds, out of fear of foreign workers taking the place of French specialists.¹⁰² Indeed, xenophobia targeted at immigrants who failed to integrate into French society was supported by the bourgeoisie to a far greater extent than racial discrimination and had deep historical routes, having been created by the distinction between the 'foreigner' and the 'native' during the Franco-Prussian war.¹⁰³ This xenophobia does, in fact, appear in Vichy documentary film, for example in the form of the repeated positioning through camerawork of colonial subjects in clearly inferior postures, generally below, white colonial engineers or military personnel. Linked to the exportation of 'superior' French values through the *mission*

⁹⁹ See for example Gérard Noiriel, p.156

¹⁰⁰ Michael Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, p.26

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.32

¹⁰² See for example Donna Evleth, 'The Ordre des Médecins and the Jews in Vichy France, 1940-1944', in *French History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1996, pp.204-224

¹⁰³ Gérard Noiriel, p.59

civilisatrice, xenophobia designed to emphasise the prowess of white French people over the colonised supported the idea that France was a strong national power and thus provided the same source of reassurance and pride as the Empire, whereas measures aimed against minorities on religious grounds did not. Indeed, despite attempts by Xavier Vallat and Charles Maurras, amongst others, to encourage explicitly anti-Semitic legislation and to therefore formalise racial discrimination, such measures did not receive sufficient public support, unlike pro-family ideals, to generate consensus in the political sphere.¹⁰⁴ If racial discrimination did not receive the same level of support as the Empire or the family, this was in part because of the ignorance of the majority of the French people regarding the Jewish religion, and in part because the principal perceived threat to French strength was the easily-identifiable foreigner.¹⁰⁵ For the majority of the French people, influenced by the dominant social values of bourgeois society—including Vichy's documentary filmmakers—racial discrimination was of secondary importance to the base patriotism inherent in the concept of French national standing.

The nature of the themes that were the subject of support before the Occupation, and which later featured in documentary film under Vichy, provides an important insight into the mind-set of Vichy's functionaries. These themes were above all aimed at ensuring that France remained a strong world power and were broadly more consensual than anti-Semitism. They represented, on the whole, the dominant social values of French bourgeois society in the 1930s, frequently transcending class and social barriers. These themes were, in short, representative of precisely the sorts of ideals and values familiar to the largely middle-class audiences of Vichy documentaries. If there was something discriminatory about the desire to maintain the superiority of French colonial values over local customs, this was arguably part of the wider patriotism which was part of the dominant social values of bourgeois society in the pre-Occupation years and found widely in other colonial countries, including Britain. The absence of anti-Semitism and broader racial discrimination from the themes and ideals

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.139-141

¹⁰⁵ See for example Donna Evleth, pp.210-211

adopted by the bourgeoisie in the inter-war years, combined with the support for more patriotic concerns like the Empire, reflects the developments in the debate around the political nature of the Vichy regime. These were nationalist and conservative values, but not necessarily fascistic, lacking the same overtly racial characteristics of fascism.¹⁰⁶ The prevalence of themes like the Empire and traditional family values, and the exclusion of overtly anti-Semitic ideals amongst the dominant values of bourgeois society and in the documentary films of the Occupation, supports the view, expressed by Michel Dobry, that France was comparably 'immune' to fascism in contrast to Germany and Italy.¹⁰⁷ The maintenance of colonialism in particular was also supported widely by similar countries like Britain,¹⁰⁸ and indeed, as is discussed later in the thesis, were features of British wartime newsreel and documentary film. Above all, though, these themes were driven by general public support rather than through political channels. As such, they demonstrate that the political system, including the anti-Semitic *ligues*,¹⁰⁹ was not a major concern for French bourgeois society, supporting the concept that the French before the Occupation were not sufficiently involved with the political sphere to be swayed by the allure of fascism. It is important to emphasise again that the makers of Vichy documentary and newsreel were not politicians, and with the exception of Clerc, Aimot and Tixier-Vignancour they had no track record of political involvement; they were, instead, middle-class professionals, without, on the whole, political attachments or alignments. Indeed, that such a small number of those involved with the production of Vichy documentary film had any political history underlines the extent to which these filmmakers, from broadly middle-class professions, had little apparent interest in the political sphere. The level of autonomy that they and their supervisors at the SGI enjoyed during the Occupation, in fact, suggests that the themes

¹⁰⁶ On the characteristics of fascism see for example Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1991) pp.26-55

¹⁰⁷ See Michel Dobry, 'La thèse immunitaire face aux fascismes,' in Michel Dobry (Ed.), *Le mythe de l'allergie française au fascisme* (Paris: Bibliothèque Albin Michel, 2003) p.53

¹⁰⁸ On the British Empire see for example Colin Smith, *England's last war against France: fighting Vichy, 1940-1942* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009) pp.29-33

¹⁰⁹ On the *Ligues*, see for example Michel Winock, *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1982) p.170

developed in their films have more to say about the interests and ideals, and lack of political engagement, of French bourgeois society and particularly the middle-classes, the makers and the audiences of these films, under Vichy than they do about the wider Vichy leadership.

iv. Conclusions: Towards an analysis of the portrayal of life under Occupation in Vichy documentary film

The men and women responsible for controlling and making Vichy's documentary film collectively had little experience of making film before the Occupation, let alone propaganda in line with the definition of the term adopted in this thesis, that is material that sets out to influence the actions or thoughts of the audience in the interest of the people producing this material, or their 'masters.' Yet despite their relative inexperience, these middle-class professionals, from a diverse range of careers, were chosen for some form of involvement with the production of Vichy documentary film. A few, notably Clerc, Aimot, and Tixier-Vignancour, were chosen for their political connections, which in each of these cases reflected the nationalist and reactionary ideas of the Vichy leadership. Clerc, Aimot and Tixier-Vignancour were the exceptions to the rule; the majority of the men and women involved with Vichy propaganda film had no political connections and were chosen largely because of their previous, short-lived experience of making political newsreel, as was the case for Philippe Este and his team at Pathé, or because they had backgrounds in professions that involved similar techniques to those employed in propaganda, as with Louis Merlin and his marketing experience. These were the best men and women that the SGI had to hand: far from hardened propagandists, these filmmakers, and their supervisors, were instead plucked from their professional middle-class careers and asked to make what was explicitly labelled as propaganda. The majority of these filmmakers were very similar to their audiences, especially those in large urban conurbations, in that they were from the middle-classes, and that they were largely apolitical, reflecting the general disapproval of the political system under the Third Republic. The themes that featured in their films likewise had much in common with the interests of their audiences, focussing above all on the importance of

French national standing, the traditional image of the family and the maintenance of France's place on the world stage, each of which were themes which had only been the subject of political interference in the face of strong public demand, as with the Daladier Family Code.

The nature of these themes, the relative inexperience and absence of apparent political connections of the men and women responsible for commissioning and producing these films, combined with the audience's perceptions of documentary film as 'educational', each played an important role in shaping the portrayal of everyday life in Vichy documentary film. In the same way, as the French collectively had been slow to realise the importance of documentary film for propaganda purposes, the Vichy authorities allowed the makers and managers of documentary far greater autonomy over the content of their films than the producers of radio and poster propaganda. The lack of regular governmental intervention over the content of documentary film was especially important in allowing the SGI to recruit any filmmakers it had to hand, which in turn prompted the appointment of such a diverse and relatively inexperienced crop of personnel.

It is clear that the men and women behind Vichy documentary, and indeed newsreel, film did not, on the whole, have track records of political engagement before the Occupation. That their films promote themes which reflected bourgeois values suggests that they continued to engage with ideas that did not necessarily entail political affiliation or connections. These men and women became propagandists under the Vichy regime, responding to the demands of the SGI. Yet just because these filmmakers were employed by Vichy did not necessarily mean that they were supportive of the regime; indeed with the exception of the likes of Clerc and Tixier-Vignancour, the pre-war record of these men and women did not imply automatic support for the political system of the État français. So what were the motivations of these filmmakers in their portrayal of everyday life under Pétain? Were they simply reflecting their own interests and probably those of the middle-class members of the audience? Were these men and women driven by a desire to promote the

regime? Or were their motivations more nuanced? How did these filmmakers' comparative inexperience as propagandists shape their films? How did their autonomy affect the appearance of themes from before the Occupation in their portrayal of everyday life? In order to explore these questions in more detail, it is, at this stage, necessary to turn to the documentaries themselves.

Chapter II

Comfort in continuity: the moderate portrayal of the National Revolution in Vichy documentary film, 1940-1942

THE small town of Commentry might seem an unlikely candidate for a formal state visit. Located on the river Cher in the Allier *département*, Commentry lacks the illustrious past as its neighbour, the spa town of Vichy. Yet in May 1941, Commentry, along with nearby Montluçon, was the subject of an official visit by Marshal Pétain and his entourage. The Marshal toured the local landmarks, notably the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, where he stood alongside veterans and workers to celebrate the Fête du Travail of 1st May.

Captured on camera in the 1941 documentary film *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*,¹ later re-released in a reduced version for the *FAPG* newsreel, Pétain's state visit to these two small towns were typical of the Marshal's journeys across the Unoccupied Zone. Greeted by smiling young children as fervently as by the veterans and workers, Pétain's visit drew large crowds.² The scenes of French men, women and children from all walks of life lining the streets of the two small towns create a sense that life under Vichy is entirely acceptable, even verging on the normality of France before the Occupation. Work continues as normal, demonstrated by the range of workers who leave their offices, mines and factories to pay homage to the Marshal: the excitement of the crowd and the importance of the occasion are palpable, yet there is little to suggest that, beyond the pomp of a state visit, very much has changed in these two provincial towns in recent years. There is, indeed, no hint that part of France might be occupied; the Marshal is accompanied by a French police escort, arriving in a motorised cavalcade, with no references to the German authorities north of the Demarcation Line.

¹ *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* (Dir: Philippe Este, 1941) CNC film number: 163455

² On Pétain's visit to Montluçon and Commentry for the Fête du Travail, see Rémi Dalisson, *Les Fêtes du Maréchal: Propagande et imaginaire dans la France de Vichy* (Paris: Tallandier, 2007) p.95

Three years later, on Pétain's first official visit to the Occupied Zone, French cinema audiences were exposed to an almost identical picture of pomp and circumstance mixed with normality, only on this occasion in Paris. Larger crowds than those in either Montluçon or Commentry were drawn to the Place de Grève in front of the Hôtel de Ville to hear the Marshal utter a few words, followed by a mass rendition of the *Marseillaise*. While the *tricolore* was notably absent, banned from display by the German authorities throughout the Occupation,³ the spontaneous song by the Parisian crowd was not suppressed, and was notably a significant part of the 1944 documentary film *Une Page d'Histoire*,⁴ celebrating Pétain's 88th birthday. Like the scenes that accompanied Pétain's tour of the Allier, the film focusses on the outpouring of joy towards the head of state visiting the capital city. In the same way, there is nothing to suggest that Paris is under German occupation; there are no signs whatsoever of the German authorities in the film. Life, it appears, continues as normal under the Marshal and his government.

From the first full year of Occupation until four months before the Liberation, Vichy documentaries thus differed very little in their approach. Both of these films, which focussed on the visits of the head of state to two very different parts of France, underlined the appearance of normality around Pétain's tours. The absence of German soldiers in both locations ignores the realities of the Occupation. While in Commentry and Montluçon this absence was down to the position of the two towns in the Unoccupied Zone, and in Paris the German authorities deemed it in their own interests not to appear during Pétain's visit,⁵ the absence of Germans in the films nevertheless provides a reassuringly familiar image of events across France. These two films therefore offer an informative point on which to start this chapter, which examines the way in which Vichy documentary film portrayed life under

³ See Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation of France* (London: Macmillan, 2003) p.145

⁴ *Une Page d'Histoire- les 88 ans de Pétain* (Dir: Unknown, 1944) INA AFE01000825. The documentary was produced by *France-Actualités* and its Director was probably Maurice Touzé, who took over from Henri Clerc as Director-General in March 1944. See Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les documenteurs...*, p.56

⁵ Michèle Cointet, *Pétain et les Français* (Paris: Perrin, 2002) p.266; See also film: *Les Voyages du Maréchal* (Dir: Christian Delage, with participation of Denis Peschanski and Henry Rouso, 1990)

the first two years of the Occupation. That the two films differed very little in their content and approach is representative of a wider trend in Vichy documentary film: filmmakers continued to provide a reassuring image of life under Pétain. In so doing, the filmmakers drew regularly on themes and values which formed part of the dominant values of French bourgeois society and proved popular amongst the middle-classes, who comprised the majority of cinema audiences, especially in urban areas, in the years before Vichy. Through drawing on these themes and values, including notably the Empire, the family, the maintenance of the French nation, the *Marseillaise*, and through ignoring the presence of the German occupiers, while emphasising French independence and strength under Vichy, these documentaries consistently convey a sense of apparently 'normal' life from before the defeat that was at odds not only with the realities of the Occupation but also with the portrayal of the ideals and policies of the Vichy regime conveyed in other forms of propaganda.

Discriminatory ideals and legislation, especially anti-Semitism, though also Anglophobia and anti-Gaullist sentiments, are ignored in favour of what appears to be a more inclusive and generally a more consensual image, while at the same time promoting the traditional, exclusive image of the family, with women, for example, confined largely to the domestic sphere. Where these policies and ideals featured in posters and on the radio, they were altogether excluded from documentaries. Thus while the makers of other forms of propaganda, and their supervisors, set out to promote a more realistic, if also more exclusionary, image of the Vichy regime, these documentary filmmakers did not.

Such was the importance placed on continuing to promote a more consensual image of the Vichy regime in documentary film that this technique defied a trend of promoting collaboration in other forms of propaganda and thus failed to reflect the increasing collaborationism of the upper echelons of the SGI and the Vichy leadership. Although public reactions to newsreel became increasingly negative from July 1941, with audiences in the Unoccupied Zone whistling at images of Laval and Hitler,⁶ responses to documentaries are

⁶ See for example Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', p.439

less well-known, since there are very few records of reception, and those that do exist tend not to make distinctions between Vichy-produced and German-produced film.⁷ As Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit has recorded: ‘Il est difficile de connaître l’impact des documentaires de propagande sur les spectateurs.’⁸ Indeed, Steve Wharton has argued that audiences continued to view documentaries as ‘educational’ and even as ‘truthful’ for the duration of the Occupation,⁹ and it seems likely that audiences would have been susceptible to the messages contained in this material, specifically the focus on the continuity of aspects to life from before the defeat. Unlike newsreels, which began to include reports on collaboration from March 1941¹⁰ with the arrival of Paul Marion at the head of the SGI, documentaries persistently ignored references to the Occupation.

Vichy documentary films between 1940 and the Liberation in 1944 were, in fact, largely similar in their content, despite the very different contexts in which the films were released. Indeed, while there was an initial sense of relief at Pétain’s request for an Armistice in 1940, in what Pierre Laborie has termed a ‘mouvement spontané de confiance vers Pétain,’¹¹ public support for the regime was virtually non-existent by 1944. Indeed, the *synthèse* of the Prefect reports from February 1944 recorded that: ‘La fin de l’année 1943 et le premier mois de l’année 1944 ont été dominés par un très net sentiment de nervosité et d’inquiétude.’¹² Despite continuing to focus on themes and symbols which were close to the hearts of many French people, especially the middle-class cinema-goer, and despite this continued emphasis on a more moderate image of the Vichy regime, these documentary filmmakers failed to alter the decline in public support for the government. Competing against a backdrop of

⁷ See for example Bertin-Maghit, p.70

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Steve Wharton, p.205

¹⁰ In one of the most illuminating examples of this trend, *FAPG* reported on Darlan’s interview with Hitler at Berchtesgaden in May 1941, in the guise of a report on Darlan’s subsequent meeting with the cabinet. See ‘Le rapport de l’Amiral Darlan au Conseil des Ministres après son entrevue avec le Chancelier Hitler,’ *FAPG*, 20/05/1941, PJM 1941217

¹¹ See Pierre Laborie, *L’Opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1990) p.229

¹² ‘Synthèse mensuel des rapports des Préfets (Zone Nord et Zone Sud),’ 15/02/1944, IHTP

increasingly collaborationist policies in the form of the Relève of June 1942¹³ and the STO of February 1943,¹⁴ alongside an increase in anti-Semitism embodied in the round-ups across both zones,¹⁵ all of which featured in some form in radio and poster propaganda, it is perhaps unsurprising that these films did not overturn the slump in support for the Vichy regime. Indeed, each of these events proved highly unpopular with the French public, identifying the regime increasingly with the policies of the Nazis and thus pushing public opinion towards open hostility. As Laborie has recorded: ‘Les rafles montrent avec certitude à la population que le régime de Vichy est non seulement complice mais travaille pour le compte de l’Allemagne nazie. [...] L’opinion découvre la réalité des liens qui unissent les deux politiques et elle progresse vers une véritable prise de conscience de cette collusion.’¹⁶

The question is, then, why these documentary filmmakers continued to persevere with this approach. Were they convinced that they could rally the viewing public back to the regime? Did they have some personal interest in portraying a more moderate image of the Vichy regime? Were they driven by their own personal gain? Why, of all media, is it documentary film that continued to promote these themes and to emphasise the continuity of apparently ‘normal’ everyday life from before the Occupation at the expense of the realities of life under Vichy? Even newsreel did not maintain such a consistent approach. What, then, was so special about documentaries?

This chapter and the two subsequent chapters respond to these questions, investigating how documentary film portrayed daily life under the Occupation, and thus why documentaries consistently set out to promote a more consensual image of the National Revolution and the Vichy regime. The chapter examines why these films often drew on themes which were the subject of popular support in the late Third Republic, as part of the dominant social values of

¹³ The voluntary *relève* scheme was introduced under Pierre Laval as an attempt to repatriate greater numbers of Prisoners of War; for every three workers despatched to work in Germany, one PoW was released. See Robert O. Paxton, pp.281-282

¹⁴ On the STO see Robert O. Paxton, pp.292-293

¹⁵ On the round-ups in the summer of 1942 see for example Claude Lévy and Paul Tillard, *La Grande Rafle du Vel d’Hiv* (Paris: Tallandier, 2010) pp.136-141

¹⁶ Pierre Laborie, p.280

the time, while also emphasising the more consensual aspects of ideals and policies introduced under Vichy, and ignoring or underplaying potentially divisive subjects. In so doing, the chapter examines why this approach was so different from other contemporary media, especially radio and poster propaganda. This chapter, and chapters three and four, focus exclusively on documentary films which conform with the definition set out in the introduction to this thesis, that is to say films produced with the consent, funding or support of the SGI. The films have been selected on the basis that they met with the approval of the Vichy authorities, and while, broadly speaking, their production took place in the Unoccupied Zone between 1940 and 1942, and in the Occupied Zone thereafter, the location of production has not been considered as a factor when selecting the films. This is because these films are all 'Vichy' documentary films, with connections to the Vichy authorities, rather than the German-funded French-language documentary films which were produced at the Hôtel Continental.¹⁷

The chapter analyses the more consensual image of the National Revolution and Vichy regime which features in these films through taking a chronological approach, beginning at the very start of the Occupation and ending in 1942, after the occupation of North Africa by the Allies, the introduction of the *Relève*, and the series of *rafles* that took place throughout the year. Chapter three then examines films in 1943, and chapter four subsequently examines documentary film in 1944, the year of the Liberation. The chapter thus seeks to examine whether the discrepancies between documentary film and other media can in part be explained by the particular nature of the people in charge of these films, from the directors to the cameramen and from the producers to the overseers of documentary film at the SGI. The chapter therefore considers the importance of the filmmakers themselves in shaping this material, and investigates how the trajectories of the filmmakers and their relative autonomy, alongside the wider context of the cinema, can explain the reasons for the discrepancies between this propaganda medium and others, including posters and the radio.

¹⁷ On Continental Films, see for example Alan Riding, *And the show went on: Cultural life in Nazi-Occupied Paris* (London: Duckworth Overlook, 2010) p.188

This chapter thus analyses films from 1940 to 1942, commencing with *Dakar*, when support for the regime was initially tacit amongst the population at large, following the ‘mouvement spontané’ recorded by Laborie. This was also a time when Vichy was closest to the Republican tradition, before the increasingly exclusionary policies of the round-ups and the overt collaborationism within France. It then moves on to the first *année tournante* of the Occupation, 1941, which saw a slump in support for the regime caused by increased collaborationism under Darlan, and during which time the *synthèse* of Prefect reports noted that: ‘La population est surtout soucieuse de ses intérêts immédiats [mais] elle s’inquiète beaucoup et, désorientée, se demande quels événements elle va être à nouveau appelée à vivre.’¹⁸ The chapter therefore examines four documentaries which reflect the promotion of a consensual image of life under Vichy and the Occupation in this material:

Méditerranée/Niger; *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*; *Jeunes de France*; and *Fidélité*. The chapter then focuses on films from 1942, coinciding with both the return to power of Pierre Laval in April, and the first edition of the *France-Actualités* newsreel in August, analysing *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, *Nourrir la France* and *Travail*.

While Wharton’s focus in his work, especially in his analysis of both *Le Jardin sans fleurs* and *Chefs de demain*, is concerned in particular with the distinctions between Vichy and its predecessor, these chapters examine the films for the continuity of themes that were popular amongst the French middle-classes before the Occupation. In the same way, the chapter builds on the analysis of Bertin-Maghit, who also tends to emphasise the distinctions between Vichy and the past in his work. Thus through examining the films for their moderate portrayal of the National Revolution, and through analysing the films with special attention to their emphasis on themes which were promoted in the past, the thesis therefore offers an original contribution. The thesis also differs from existing work by examining the discrepancies between the promotion of the National Revolution in the films and in other propaganda forms, notably posters and radio programmes. By taking this approach, the

¹⁸ ‘Synthèse mensuel des rapports des Préfets de la zone occupée,’ 18/01/1941, IHTP

thesis makes an original contribution to our understanding of the Vichy regime, since it not only offers an initial detailed examination of most of the films discussed, but also probes the films for what they say about the wider debate around the competing personalities and interests at work under Vichy, specifically those of the makers of these films. The emphasis on consensual themes in these films clearly demonstrates that some Vichy filmmakers recognised the continuity of traditions and daily life from before the Occupation, away from the presence of more overtly exclusionary measures, in sharp contrast to the treatment of the regime's programme in other propaganda.

i. Taking comfort in the Empire: *Dakar*, 1940

Whilst Vichy documentary film tended to emphasise a consensual side to the National Revolution and to the Vichy regime, and underlined the continuity under Pétain of aspects of life before the Occupation, the actual context of the initial documentaries produced by the Vichy authorities was one of upheaval and confusion. In June 1940, around six million French civilians took to the roads in flight from the German invaders.¹⁹ The blame for the confusion was in part directed at the Republic; not only had the military been insufficiently prepared, but the local representatives of the Republic—mayors, Prefects and even the police—were perceived to have deserted their posts.²⁰ Hanna Diamond notes that: 'The Vichy government explicitly encouraged a judgemental approach which condemned those that had left, projecting them as having betrayed their charges [...] most government officials had taken to the roads in the same panic as everyone else.'²¹ Indeed, 'many complained that they had been abandoned by the central administration and had to take decisions for themselves.'²²

This identification of the servants of the Republic with the chaos of the defeat created a general sentiment that the regime had failed France in her hour of need and reflected the

¹⁹ See Hanna Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler*, p.150

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.180

²¹ *Ibid*, p.175

²² *Ibid*, p.176

widespread disapproval of the Republic's institutions expressed in the late 1930s.²³ The expressions of relief at Pétain's request for an Armistice led to what Pierre Laborie has termed a 'ralliement' to the Marshal's cause: 'Penser Pétain reste la seule et unique façon de continuer à penser français.'²⁴ In July 1940 the French people were especially susceptible to persuasion of the necessity to replace the political framework and instability of the Republic.²⁵ The scenes of the *exode* had been far from those of normality and Pétain and his initial government sought to translate this chaos into support for the creation of a new regime by reassuring the French people that he would restore order. Thus Pétain's speech of 17th June 1940 set out to assure the French that both the fighting and the turmoil of the *exode* would come to an end. In particular, several lines sought to comfort the refugees on the road:

'En ces heures douloureuses, je pense aux malheureux réfugiés qui, dans un dénuement extrême, sillonnent nos routes. Je leur exprime ma compassion et ma sollicitude. C'est avec le cœur serré que je vous dis aujourd'hui qu'il faut cesser le combat.'²⁶

While in later months and years of the Occupation, the radio (the medium in which Pétain's 17th June speech was broadcast to the French people) tended to promote a more exclusionary, and ultimately less comforting, version of the National Revolution, in June 1940 this emphasis on a return to normality was a trend which would be taken up in documentary film.

It was thus in this climate of relief at the end of hostilities and gratitude to Pétain that the Vichy authorities began to explore the possibilities of making filmed propaganda, in which the emphasis on normality and continuity would play such an important part. Tixier-Vignancour's initial approach to Marcel Pagnol to assist in the production of footage of the British naval attack on the French fleet at Mers-el-Kébir, which led to the creation of the film *La Tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir*, took place only a month after the voting of full powers

²³ See for example Robert O. Paxton, pp.29-36

²⁴ Pierre Laborie, p.224

²⁵ Hanna Diamond, p.182; Pierre Laborie, pp.228-231

²⁶ See Philippe Pétain, 'Appel du 17 juin 1940,' in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, pp.57-58

to Pétain on 10th July 1940.²⁷ Material restrictions, in particular the abandonment of nearly all existing governmental filming equipment, along with that of the three pre-war newsreels of Pathé, Gaumont and Éclair-Journal in the Occupied Zone,²⁸ meant that the authorities did not release many stand-alone documentaries in the first year of the Occupation. Instead, the SGI concentrated above all on the launch of *FAPG*, which was prioritised in order to prevent the Propaganda Abteilung from expanding the reach of the *Actualités-Mondiales* series to the Unoccupied Zone.²⁹

Tixier-Vignancour and Guy de Carmoy, despite their relative inexperience in the realms of cinema propaganda, as discussed in chapter one, succeeded in setting up a series of documentary films by November 1940 under the title of *La France en Marche*.³⁰ The very first episode of the series, *Dakar*,³¹ is especially revealing of the moderate image of the Vichy authorities promoted in these films, emphasising a sense of continuity and normality with the past which was in steep contrast with the wider political context, and indeed went against the message promoted in Pétain's radio broadcasts subsequent to 17th June 1940. If the Marshal had succeeded in ending hostilities, and had sought to ease the plight of the millions of displaced refugees, and if his 17th June appeal had seemed to offer a glimpse of normality, Pétain's radio broadcast of 30th October 1940, in which he detailed his meeting with Hitler on 24th October, suggested that politically the Vichy regime would be rather different in its approach to that of the old Republic. Whereas the Germans had been the enemy before June 1940, in October 1940 they were to become partners. In his broadcast, Pétain went to great lengths to demonstrate that the Montoire meeting of 24th October was an autonomous one: 'c'est librement que je me suis rendu à l'invitation du Führer. Je n'ai subi,

²⁷ See for example Brett Bowles, 'Accommodating Vichy: the Politics of Marcel Pagnol's *La Fille du puisatier*,' p.7

²⁸ See Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology and Public Opinion...', p.424

²⁹ Brett Bowles, 'Accommodating Vichy...', p.8

³⁰ The series as a whole was produced by documentary-maker André Verdet-Kléber and regionalist Jean des Vallières. See Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology and Public Opinion...', p.426

³¹ *Dakar, après l'attentat des 23, 24 et 25 septembre 1940, La France en Marche No.1* (Dir: Jean Coupan, 1940)

de sa part, aucun « diktat », aucune pression.³² This line alone would have appeared a step away from the status quo of life before the defeat. When accompanied by the defiant claim that ‘celui qui a pris en main les destinées de la France a le devoir de créer l’atmosphère la plus favorable à la sauvegarde des intérêts du pays’ and the need to enter into ‘la voie de collaboration,’ Pétain’s discourse does little to provide a comforting sense of ‘normality.’

This speech, broadcast on Radio-Vichy, also known as Radio nationale, thus signalled a move *away* from the attitudes of the previous regime; the distinctiveness of this new ‘path’ of collaboration was also emphasised in the coverage accorded to the meeting in the Germans-produced newsreel, *Actualités Mondiales*, shown in the Occupied Zone.³³ By contrast, when the same meeting appeared in *FAPG* in December, the Vichy report emphasised the ‘equality’ between Pétain and Hitler.³⁴ Yet for radio audiences across France, and for cinema-goers north of the Demarcation Line, the image projected of Pétain and his new regime was different from the political status quo under the Republic. The uncertainty surrounding the nature of the ‘collaboration’ envisaged by Pétain complemented a wider sense of doubt over the potential duration of the regime. The *synthèse* of the Prefect reports from November and December 1940 recorded first ‘une inquiétude très vive’³⁵ with regards to collaboration, followed by an assessment that ‘vis-à-vis de l’Allemagne, le sentiment public devient de plus en plus réservé.’³⁶ The French people living in the Occupied Zone also witnessed the physical manifestation of German superiority in their lives, in the form of the occupying army, adding to the sense of confusion over the state of domestic affairs prompted by Pétain’s radio broadcast and the German *Actualités-Mondiales* report. Jean Guéhenno, whose political views were in any case quite distinct from those espoused by the Vichy leadership, recorded his horror at seeing well-fed German soldiers at the school opposite his apartment in October 1940, shortly before Pétain’s broadcast: ‘Les

³² Philippe Pétain, ‘Message du 30 octobre 1940,’ in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, pp.94–96

³³ ‘Entrevue historique du Chancelier Hitler avec le Maréchal Pétain,’ *Actualités-Mondiales*, 13/11/1940. INA AFE85000177

³⁴ ‘L’entrevue de Montoire,’ *FAPG*, 11/12/1940, PJM 1940 7 5

³⁵ ‘Synthèse mensuel des rapports des Préfets de la zone occupée,’ 17/11/1940, IHTP

³⁶ ‘Synthèse mensuel des rapports des Préfets de la zone occupée,’ 06/12/1940, IHTP

Allemands, installés dans l'école de l'autre côté de la rue, luisants et bien nourris, chantent au commandement. Que va devenir de ce pays au fond d'une telle misère?'³⁷ For French people like Guéhenno, living and working in the Occupied Zone, and even for those French people south of the Demarcation Line, the political situation in October 1940 was uncertain, to say the least, and life seemed very different from the pre-Occupation era.

Yet although Pétain's radio broadcast of 30th October 1940, combined with German newsreel coverage of the Montoire meeting and the physical presence of German soldiers on French soil, did not offer any reassurance of normality, and seemed to indicate a new direction for the country, this was in contrast with the approach taken in *Dakar*, released the following month. Of all the assets at the disposal of the Vichy regime, the one which offered the greatest link to the pre-war years, and which offered the stability absent from domestic political affairs before and during the Occupation was the Empire. The defence and promotion of the Empire was a means through which the Vichy authorities could underline their commitment to France for the future, and overcome the potentially damaging sense that the regime was only a temporary affair. Montoire, which prompted the first 'signes de doute et d'inquiétude'³⁸ amongst the French population, could be countered with a visual signal of the continuing stability of the Empire. As Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boëtsch put it:

'Depuis la défaite française de l'été 1940, son Empire colonial et particulièrement ses possessions africaines, ont une place essentielle dans le destin de la France: eux seuls semblent avoir échappé au désastre, à l'effondrement et à l'occupation des troupes allemandes.'³⁹

Where radio had led to signs of doubt, documentary film strove for reassurance. Indeed, the Empire, with its suggestion of French international strength, was, in Maurice Larkin's terms,

³⁷ Jean Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires 1940-1944* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002) p.56

³⁸ Pierre Laborie, p.240

³⁹ See Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boëtsch, 'La France de Pétain et l'Afrique: Images et propagandes coloniales,' in *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue canadienne des Études Africaines* (Vol.28, No.1 (1994) p.2

‘a source of reassurance and pride.’⁴⁰ By contrast, ‘anti-colonialism in France was restricted to a small section of the population.’⁴¹ Such had been the extent of pro-colonial opinion in France before the war that the six month-long 1931 Exposition Coloniale, held at the Bois de Vincennes, was a triumph of colonialist sentiment and attracted around 33 million visitors in total, with reports published daily in national newspapers.⁴² Whereas Radio-Vichy and the German newsreel series focussed on the uncomfortable realities of collaboration, in November 1940 this huge public support for the Empire was ripe for exploitation. Documentary film would make much of the opportunities offered by the Empire over the course of the Occupation.

Dakar, the first in the *France en Marche* series, and arguably the first significant documentary film of the Vichy regime, thus sought to seize this opportunity, and stands in steep contrast to the radio’s role in prompting uncertainty and confusion over collaboration. The film underlines the continued importance of the Empire under Vichy through focussing on the Senegalese capital following the failed Anglo-Gaullist attack of September 1940,⁴³ and emphasises that the status-quo of the Empire has not been altered by the creation of Pétain’s state and the defeat. Directed by Jean Coupan, the regime’s newly-nominated censor of *FAPG*, and later Secretary-General of *France-Actualités*,⁴⁴ the film was backed by the Vichy leadership, having been produced at Marcel Pagnol’s Marseille studios where Coupan was based. As the principal SGI supervisor for Vichy newsreel, Coupan was charged with ensuring filmed propaganda supported the interests of the regime. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that his first non-fiction documentary film promoted the Vichy regime in a very positive light in terms of its defence and maintenance of the Empire.

⁴⁰ Maurice Larkin, p.32

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² See for example Catherine Hodeir, ‘Decentering the gaze at French colonial exhibitions,’ in Paul S. Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin (Eds.), *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (California: University of California Press, 2002) p.237

⁴³ On the Anglo-Gaullist assault on Dakar, see Colin Smith, pp.111-136

⁴⁴ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.54

The film combines action shots of the battle between the Vichy forces on the one hand and the British and the Gaullists on the other, with images of the aftermath of the events, in which French colonialism is demonstrated to be alive and well. Opening with a shot of Dakar's coastal defences, the documentary is quick to underline the military achievements of the Vichy forces. To the sound of dramatic martial music, the narrator announces that: 'l'attaque des Anglais est repoussée grâce aux efforts de l'armée française, sous la direction du gouverneur-général Boisseau.' The coastal guns are shown exchanging fire with the British warships, as the camera cuts to a shot of the battleship 'Richelieu' as it fires salvos at British aeroplanes. The triumphal music continues as the male narrator records that 'c'est grâce aux défenses côtières que la contre-attaque a pu être menée.' The scenes of heroic French defenders are reinforced when the camera cuts to the Plage de Rufisque where Commandant Millon and his *tirailleurs sénégalais* are shown returning fire and beating off the British commandoes and Gaullist soldiers, who, according to the narrator 'ont résisté jusqu'à la victoire.' Having established the military success of the Vichy troops, emphasising the continuing international standing of France under Pétain, the film then moves on to showing the devastation to the city of Dakar. As the camera pans across the bombed-out shells of Senegalese houses, the narrator records solemnly that while 'le moral des Français et des indigènes restent intact,' the bombardment 'est responsable de nombreuses victimes.'

The camera intersperses images of the damage caused by the bombardment with a wide-angled shot of a hillside cemetery, in which the crew of the destroyer the 'Audacieux' have just been interred. Having slowly taken in the recently-dug graves of the crew, the camera then cuts to graves of local civilians caught in the crossfire. Boisseau, the narrator informs the audience, has organised a special funeral service for the military and civilian victims of the bombardments, as the camera cuts to the cathedral, where military and civilian dignitaries are shown paying homage to the dead. After establishing the military strength of the French forces under Pétain, the film underlines the continuing importance of the French

colonial model, the *mission civilisatrice*. As local people are shown returning to their homes, the film suggests the continuing physical superiority of the French authorities. A group of Vichy French soldiers, overseeing the re-entry into the city centre from their defensive positions, are shown physically above a group of Senegalese women and children, as if to emphasise their moral superiority. The narrator reinforces this visual maintenance of the French colonial way under Vichy: 'La bataille gagnée, les femmes et les enfants sénégalais, partis hors de la ville, peuvent revenir dans leurs maisons, protégées par les soldats du maréchal Pétain.'

The emphasis throughout the second part of the documentary, which demonstrates the effect of the bombardment, is firmly on the maintenance of the *mission civilisatrice*. Not only have the French succeeded in militarily defending Senegal, and thus the Empire, against the British, but under Boisson's leadership, the Vichy military has enabled French superiority over the colonised Senegalese. The images of French soldiers positioned physically above the local civilians, and the gratitude shown by Senegalese women towards the French authorities in *Dakar* demonstrates the continuity of the *mission civilisatrice*, with what Blanchard and Boëtsch have described in the context of their work on the wider colonial propaganda of the Vichy regime as 'un mélange complexe teinté de paternalisme et de xenophobie.'⁴⁵ Indeed, the deliberate shot of the French soldiers 'du maréchal Pétain' staring down at the local civilians clearly represents this mixture of paternalism and xenophobia; the locals are shown to be physically, and thus morally, inferior to the white French soldiers. Viewers of *Dakar* could rest assured that the French control over the Empire was as strong as ever, and the *mission civilisatrice* still well and truly alive, despite the uncertainties of collaboration provoked by Pétain's radio broadcast. Larkin's account of the 'self-congratulatory' views of the French people with regards to the Empire⁴⁶ is very much reflected in the documentary. The combination of triumphal martial music, shots of French military prowess and then the paternalistic care taken over the return of the civilians to the

⁴⁵ Blanchard and Boëtsch, p.3

⁴⁶ Maurice Larkin, p.32

damaged streets of the city combine to emphasise the strength of France overseas. The film strives for, and succeeds in developing, a patriotic, reassuring tone. The presence of the *tricolore* in the service at the cathedral, in the cemetery and on the warships, enforces the nationalistic sentiments of the film; the national flag demonstrates the continuity of French superiority in Africa.

The film makes much of continuity with the pre-Vichy era and the presence of the *tricolore*, as the well-established French national emblem, demonstrates that the nation of France lives on, despite the presence of German soldiers on French soil and despite the new policy of collaboration. Indeed, the *tricolore* functions in the film as, in Raoul Girardet's assessment, 'l'incarnation même d'une légitimité suprême, extérieure et supérieure.'⁴⁷ Thus the Vichy forces appear as the rightful French representatives in Senegal, not the Gaullists, who are actually ignored in the film at the expense of a focus on the British, or rather the 'English' ('l'attaque anglaise'), as if to further reinforce Vichy's supremacy in the Empire. The *tricolore*, with its symbolic value as *the* flag for the majority of the French people acts as a reassuring signal of the continuity of French strength in the film and the camera angles also seek to reassure the viewer through visually emphasising the superiority of the white French colonialists. While the film never mentions the *mission civilisatrice*, it is clear from the scenes of returning local women and children that the French colonial model, with its emphasis on the superiority of French ways over local customs, is thriving under Vichy, again offering reassurance of continuity for the audience. Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, who examines the film in part for its emphasis on anti-Gaullism and Anglophobia, nevertheless also acknowledges this point: 'La représentation des autochtones et des colons [...] servent également le discours de l'Empire.'⁴⁸

This positioning of the local people vis-à-vis the white French settlers in fact reflects not only the significant support for the idea of the Empire amongst the French population before

⁴⁷ Raoul Girardet, pp.26-28

⁴⁸ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.124

the war, but also the de facto consent for those political measures which sought to reinforce the superiority of the French way of life. Thus the *Code de l'indigénat*, introduced in 1887 in Senegal, which introduced harsh rules against making rude comments about the French authorities, was very popular in France.⁴⁹ There was, then, much to reassure the audience of the strength of the French colonial status quo under Pétain in *Dakar*. The continuity of French superiority in particular, signified by both the *tricolore* and the visual manifestation of physical superiority on the part of the French soldiers, represented the certainties of the Empire pre-Occupation, and was a far cry from the uncertainties of collaboration.

Like all Vichy documentaries discussed in this chapter, *Dakar* was a deliberately misleading portrayal of the realities of the political situation at the time of the film's release in November 1940. Coupan, who was employed directly by the SGI, can have been in little doubt that his role was that of a propagandist, and thus the film a piece of propaganda; to that extent, it is perhaps unsurprising that *Dakar* ignores inconvenient realities, but these are nevertheless worth acknowledging in order to examine the distinction between documentary film and other propaganda media. Indeed, that the path of collaboration outlined in Pétain's radio broadcast is ignored outright is in particular unsurprising, for the assault on the city of Dakar did not involve the Axis powers whatsoever. Yet the suggestion throughout the film is that the French military and navy reign supreme over French territories. This was clearly not the case in November 1940 and not only was the Armistice Army restricted to just 100,000 men in a mirror image of the terms imposed on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles, but the army was banned outright from its own territory in the Occupied Zone.⁵⁰ Across the Empire, in fact, Vichy France was far from the dominant colonial power that *Dakar* seemed to suggest. From September 1940, the Japanese were permitted to use French bases in Indochina, where the French military became in effect subservient to the Axis powers.⁵¹ Although Vichy truly was in control of Senegal, elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, Chad,

⁴⁹ Martin Evans, p.23

⁵⁰ See for example Julian Jackson, p.127

⁵¹ See Robert O. Paxton, p.83

with its Governor-General Félix Éboué, had already come out for the Gaullists in August 1940,⁵² while in North Africa plans were already underway in November 1940 to ensure that the Italians were able to use Tunisian ports as they saw fit.⁵³ Thus *Dakar*, with its comforting image of France continuing as a strong colonial power under Pétain, was misleading over the extent of French autonomy in the Empire, and indeed of French military strength. The images of French warships and coastal batteries engaging the British betrayed the vulnerabilities of the French forces on the mainland and overseas. The apparent strength of the French colonial model in the film, with its apparent continuity of the *mission civilisatrice*, was thus at odds with the realities of November 1940 and if anything, Vichy forces in Indochina, in Tunisia and even in France were themselves subservient to the Axis powers.

Yet whereas *Dakar* gave the comforting impression, especially to the middle-class viewer who saw the Empire as a source of pride and reassurance, that the French maintained control over the Empire, the content of the film both complemented and countered other contemporary propaganda media. While Pétain's radio broadcast of 30th October 1940 was far from comforting, and evoked the uncomfortable realities of collaboration, which also featured in German propaganda, and then again, albeit in a re-packaged and more positive version in *FAPG* in December, contemporary Vichy posters also sought to emphasise the continuity of the French colonial project. In September 1940, Eric Castel's workshop produced a poster in which three men, each from different backgrounds, stand to attention with their bodies twisted towards the *tricolore*.⁵⁴ The men appear to come from, respectively, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Indochina, and all are pictured in their local dress. The slogan of the poster reads simply 'Trois couleurs, un drapeau, un empire.' As with *Dakar*, and indeed later documentaries, the *tricolore* functions as a means with which to unify these men behind Pétain's regime. The position of the *tricolore*, physically

⁵² *Ibid*, p.69

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.74

⁵⁴ Eric Castel, 'Trois couleurs, un drapeau, un empire.' (1940) BDIC AFF30103 (1)

above the men, reinforces the same notion of French superiority that features in *Dakar*. Like the tone of the film, Castel's poster offers a comforting reminder that the Empire continues to be well-protected by Vichy and that French ideals remain superior to local customs.



Figure 1: *Three men from different parts of the Empire stand to attention, loyal to France under Pétain as signified by the superior position of the tricolore.*

While Castel's work offers an example of posters complementing the content of documentary films, the context of this piece was very different from *Dakar*. While visually striking, Castel's poster could be ignored by passers-by. Although in November 1940 the dual programme of newsreel and documentary film was not obligatory for cinema audiences in the Unoccupied Zone, the cinema was nevertheless a vastly popular pastime, offering, especially in the cold winter months, warmth and distraction. Coupan's film was, in fact, so popular amongst audiences in the Unoccupied Zone and North Africa that it grossed 20,000 francs in rental fees during its first month and played at 30 different cinemas.⁵⁵ Audiences clearly warmed to the reassurance offered by the film and far from being ignored, *Dakar* thus proved popular for its harnessing of the Empire. As the first substantial documentary film of the Vichy period, *Dakar* offered something that neither the radio nor posters could

⁵⁵ Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', p.433

offer, namely the opportunity to leave the house and seek distraction in a warm and escapist environment. Thus if Coupan drew on the Empire in the same way as Castel, it was Coupan who had the clearest measurable success in entertaining, and indeed reassuring, his audience.

The Empire therefore offered reassurance for the viewing public, even if this reassurance was ultimately deceptive, in much the same way that Castel's poster gave the impression that Indochina and all of North Africa were controlled by Vichy. This capacity for reassurance must explain in part Coupan's decision to direct *Dakar*. Yet it is also important to return to one of the central research questions of the thesis, namely why documentary film offers a different portrayal of life under Pétain to other forms of propaganda. It is therefore informative to explore in more detail Coupan's own role in shaping what proved to be a highly positive image of Vichy's continuing control of the Empire. As the censor for *FAPG*, Coupan was familiar with the demands of the SGI's leadership, and this might explain why he, and not a more seasoned documentary maker, was commissioned to direct the film. Coupan did not have vast filmmaking experience beyond *FAPG*, although he had been involved with the production of *La Tragédie de Mers-el-Kébir*,⁵⁶ the film which eventually led to the creation of *FAPG* at Tixier-Vignancour's request, but like many of his fellow documentary directors, seems to have been chosen as much for his convenient location in the Unoccupied Zone as for any real prowess. Yet Coupan seems to have been ahead of his contemporaries at Radio-Vichy in shifting the emphasis away from collaboration and towards the Empire, offering reassurance in place of confusion and uncertainty. While Radio-Vichy had not only broadcast Pétain's 30th October speech, emphasising the distinction between the political situation under the Republic and the new path under the Marshal, it also failed to set up a regular radio slot dedicated to the Empire. Although the Director-General of Radio-Vichy, André Demaison, did succeed in setting up programmes dedicated to the Empire, they were by no means as regular as on the German-run Radio-

⁵⁶ Recorded in the catalogue entry for the film at the CNC

Paris, which broadcast 'La France coloniale' no fewer than three times per week.⁵⁷ Beyond the realisation that the Empire offered the perfect subject for reassuring cinema audiences, a realisation which was later proved by the financial success of the film, Coupan might well have been motivated by his own professional interests. Not only did *Dakar* provide Coupan with further experience of making documentary films, but it also brought him into closer contact with other filmmakers, especially the man responsible for *La France en Marche*, André Verdet-Kléber. Coupan's work with Verdet-Kléber exposed him to greater technical expertise and arguably developed his own filmmaking capabilities. Above all, though, through emphasising that the Vichy authorities were still in control of the Empire, Coupan portrayed Pétain's government in a positive light and thus furthered his own cause amongst the leadership of the SGI, initially in the form of Tixier-Vignancour and then Paul Marion, which later enabled him to become *secrétaire-général* of *France-Actualités*, with a not-insignificant pay rise of some 13,000 francs per month in August 1942.⁵⁸

Yet in directing *Dakar*, Coupan was only reflecting the support for the Empire amongst the majority of the French people, and indeed probably his own enthusiasm for colonialism as a middle-class professional. *Dakar* is thus a valuable example of the wider tendencies of Vichy documentary film. Not only does the film ignore many of the crucial realities of the time, especially the implications of collaboration for French autonomy at home and overseas, but it is also a moderate and reassuring image of the continuity of the Empire. Beyond the celebration of a victory over the British, there is nothing in the film which would have been out of place in the propaganda of a democratic Allied nation such as Britain. Indeed, the British wartime public was regularly exposed to documentaries and newsreel reports on the British Empire from 1940, which sought to reassure the audience in much the same way as *Dakar*, of the continued strength of Britain's overseas territories, albeit without the same focus on British superiority as in the focus on the *mission civilisatrice* in the second part of *Dakar*. This is especially the case for the 1940 film *Men of Africa*, released

⁵⁷ Blanchard and Boëtsch, p.9

⁵⁸ See minutes of the *France-Actualités* Conseil d'administration, 20/08/1942, AN F42 119

before *Dakar*, and indeed before the fall of France in June 1940, which emphasises the need for cooperation between Britain and African nations, including Kenya and Tanganyika, rather than underlining British superiority.⁵⁹ Indeed, the voiceover to the film stresses that, despite the wartime context, Britain ‘does not shirk her responsibilities to the Empire.’ The film reflects the importance of engineering in maintaining British national and international standing (themes developed in the later Vichy documentary *Méditerranée/Niger*), through emphasising the impact of hydro-electric plants and new harbours built by the British. The Empire was also a frequent subject of British Pathé documentaries, with topics in 1940 including a report entitled *Fiji: Outpost of Empire*,⁶⁰ which again demonstrated the continuity of the Empire to the British viewer, despite Britain’s isolation. The film showed Fijian men and women harvesting crops, building boats and even preparing themselves to defend the island in the case of invasion, in a scene in which local men paraded around the union flag, thus demonstrating both the continuity of the British Empire and the military prowess of Britain, echoing the themes promoted in *Dakar*. To this extent, *Dakar* is closer to contemporary British propaganda than to either German or Italian material, partly because neither country possessed substantial overseas territories. While the Italian propaganda authorities courted Middle-Eastern countries, including some British colonies and protectorates, with their propaganda, Abyssinia represented their only real overseas territory, and the Empire was thus not such a considerable feature of Italian propaganda.⁶¹ The fact that Vichy documentaries regularly drew on similar content, in the form of the Empire, to contemporary British films serves to offer evidence of the moderate tone and content of Vichy documentary propaganda, especially when compared to the approach taken by either German or Italian film.

Dakar was not, then, a film which reflected the contemporary realities of the Vichy regime, not only with regards to collaboration, but also the extremist measures introduced by the

⁵⁹ *Men of Africa* (Dir: Alexander Shaw, 1940), Imperial War Museum (henceforth IWM) CCE 200

⁶⁰ *Fiji: Outpost of Empire* (Dir: unknown, 1940), British Pathé Archives, UN 2132 A

⁶¹ See Manuela A. Williams, pp.10-11

Vichy authorities before its release, including the first *Statut des Juifs* in October 1940.⁶²

The film's message of continuing French military and colonial success was at odds with the limitations placed on the French army and the violations of French autonomy elsewhere in the Empire. In seeking to reassure the audience, it was ultimately misleading, and it simply did not reflect the contemporary policies of the Vichy regime, demonstrating the deceptive tendency of propaganda. Yet the film was a commercial success and must, therefore, have offered some form of reassurance to middle-class French audiences at a time of great uncertainty.

ii. Shelter from an 'evil wind'? Reassuring the public in 1941: *Fidélité*, *Méditerranée/Niger*, *Jeunes de France*, *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commenry*

Whilst the political situation at the end of 1940 was one of uncertainty surrounding the direction of the policy of collaboration, first outlined on the radio with Pétain's broadcast and reinforced in the coverage dedicated to Montoire in German, and to a lesser extent, Vichy newsreel, 1941 was a year of increasing material hardship and an initial recourse to resistance. For the vast majority of the population across both zones, 1941 was a year characterised by 'mécontentement devant l'aggravation des conditions.'⁶³ The *synthèse* of the Prefect reports from February 1941 noted the 'inquiétude des habitants de la zone occupée'⁶⁴ at the turn of the year. Uncertainty was giving way to a broad dissatisfaction with material conditions. The first murmurings of resistance activity, prompted in part by the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941,⁶⁵ prompted not only the Marshal's paternalistic, and indeed patronising, 'vent mauvais' speech of August 1941, but also a sense of 'incompréhension,' in Laborie's interpretation,⁶⁶ at the sequence of assassinations and reprisals which took hold in the latter half of the year. This incomprehension coincided with

⁶² See for example Robert O. Paxton, p.174

⁶³ Pierre Laborie, p.251

⁶⁴ 'Synthèse mensuel des rapports des Préfets de la zone occupée,' 18/01/1941, IHTP

⁶⁵ See for example Julian Jackson, p.423

⁶⁶ Pierre Laborie, p.254

the introduction of the second *Statut des Juifs* in June 1941,⁶⁷ the signing of the Paris Protocols in May 1941⁶⁸ and the arrival of collaborationist personnel at the top of the Vichy hierarchy, especially Darlan and Marion. Yet while 1941 marked a move towards an increasingly ‘extreme’, and thus to some extent realistic, portrayal of the Vichy regime through radio, documentary film continued to offer a reassuring, moderate image of the Vichy regime. The SGI was, in fact, in a better position to produce documentaries in 1941 than it had been at the latter end of 1940. Not only was *La France en Marche*, of which *Dakar* represented the first episode, increasingly well-established in 1941, but by the end of the year the Vichy authorities had created the *Comité d’Organisation de l’Industrie cinématographique* (COIC) under the leadership of Raoul Ploquin, which set about commissioning documentary films from late November 1940.⁶⁹ If the political context was even more uncertain and more ‘incomprehensible’ in 1941 than it had been during the final months of 1940, the cinematographic context was more favourable for making documentaries than before.

Despite the change in personnel at the SGI, including the arrival of Marion at the very head of the *Secrétariat*, Ploquin at COIC and Pierre Mary (about which very little has been recorded) as the inter-zone liaison officer for propaganda, replacing Tixier-Vignancour and Guy de Carmoy, documentaries took the same approach as *Dakar*, the first substantive film of 1940. The Empire therefore continued to be a reassuring subject, especially to middle-class French cinema audiences, even at a time when French territories were being exploited by the Axis powers to a far greater extent than in 1940. Two of the four documentary films discussed here deal with the Empire and both develop the same reassuring theme of the continuity of French colonial strength first established in *Dakar*. Both films also follow *Dakar*’s tendency to ignore certain realities in favour of a moderate and reassuring take

⁶⁷ See for example Robert O. Paxton, p.175; Jean-Pierre Azéma, ‘Le régime de Vichy,’ in Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Eds.), *La France des années noires 1: De la défaite à Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 2000) p.178

⁶⁸ Robert O. Paxton, p.117

⁶⁹ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.53

regarding the situation in the Empire. Championing the loyalty of every part of the Empire to Vichy France, and demonstrating French military supremacy, *Fidélité* emphasises the continuing superiority of the French over their colonial subjects, while *Méditerranée/Niger* develops this theme in Algeria. For Yves Naintré, the director of *Fidélité*, and for the unknown director (probably someone from within the *Secrétariat d'état aux colonies*) of *Méditerranée/Niger*, the Empire continued to offer fertile ground for reassuring French audiences that some aspects to life from the pre-Occupation era continued as before. The Empire also remained a subject which could distract from the hardships and inconvenient realities of everyday life. Both films certainly offer highly positive portrayals of life under Pétain, while also continuing to resemble contemporary British film more than that of either of the European Axis powers.

Fidélité: the reassuring loyalty of the Empire

Where audiences in 1940 had been shown the gratitude of the local Senegalese women and children to the French for the restoration of order following British and Gaullist bombardment, in *Fidélité* this gratitude took on global proportions. At 21 minutes in length, *Fidélité* is a tour-de-force of French colonial supremacy, taking in each of the largest overseas territories possessed by the Vichy authorities. It is also, like *Dakar*, deceptive in its portrayal of the Empire and of French strength. Not only does the film ignore the quasi-occupation of Tunisia by Italian forces,⁷⁰ but it also overlooks the support given to the Germans in Syria,⁷¹ where the Luftwaffe was permitted to use French airfields, and it also plays down the continuing dominance of the Japanese in Indochina.

Yet the film represented a serious investment for the Vichy authorities, demonstrating the importance placed on the Empire by the SGI. Not only was it financially expensive at a time of material hardship, costing some 33,020 francs,⁷² but it also drew on the services of Naintré, former head of the Paramount newsreel and a journalist who also filed reports for

⁷⁰ Robert O. Paxton, p.182

⁷¹ See Colin Smith, pp.167-173

⁷² See Memo to M. Sarrot from Galey, 30/10/1942, AN F42 125

FAPG.⁷³ Unlike Coupan, Naintré was a well-established film professional; the commissioning of an accomplished filmmaker to make a lengthy documentary about the Empire arguably underlines the seriousness with which the SGI viewed the need to reassure the French people. The film's cost was questioned by Vichy's accountants long after the film had been released, with a M. Thuillier, one of the Inspectors of Finance for the SGI, questioning the 600 francs difference between Naintré's receipts and the amount claimed for making the documentary.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the SGI still provided 70% of the film's costs, with 30% coming from the distributors, Pathé.⁷⁵ The film went on to become a huge commercial success, underlining the enthusiasm for films about the Empire and *Fidélité* grossed 15,219.50 francs in Lyons in eight days between the 29th May and the 6th June 1942.⁷⁶

Before the film has even begun, a still of Pétain's face appears on screen, followed swiftly by a reproduction of Castel's 'trois couleurs' poster, linking the Marshal with the apparent loyalty and dedication of the Empire. Instantly, Naintré thus draws on the *tricolore* to demonstrate the continuity of French colonial supremacy overseas under Pétain. The theme of the flag is in fact developed throughout the film, beginning in Indochina and reoccurring in Morocco, Algeria and Senegal. As with all Vichy film propaganda, the narrator plays a crucial role, supporting the visual indications of French colonial strength with reassuring emphasis. In *Fidélité*, unlike other documentaries, the name of the narrator is made explicit in the credits to the film, namely Jean Morel, who also directed *Travail*, discussed later in the chapter, and who was a functionary of the SGI responsible for controlling newsreel and documentary propaganda, as recorded in his correspondence with the German authorities in the SGI's archives.⁷⁷ Morel may well have been Naintré's own choice as narrator, since both men were SGI employees, or he may have been imposed on Naintré by Morel himself as the SGI controller of documentary films. In any case, Morel's commentary functions as an

⁷³ See correspondence between Naintré and M. Mourre at the SGI, 20/05/1942, AN F42 125; and correspondence between Heidrich von Weyrauch of the *Alliance Cinématographique Européenne* (the German makers of *Actualités-Mondiales*) and Jean Morel, 01/06/1942, AN F42 125

⁷⁴ See note by M. Thuillier to Galey, 29/03/1943, AN F41 92

⁷⁵ Report by M. Pouvreau, 18/02/1942, AN F41 92

⁷⁶ See Note from Eric Lagneau at Pathé to Galey, 18/06/1943, AN F41 92

⁷⁷ See the correspondence between von Weyrauch and Morel, AN F42 125

additional layer of reassurance to accompany the images of ongoing French colonial strength.

The opening of the film immediately emphasises the continued importance of the Empire. Opening in Indochina, the camera pans across ancient ruins and local symbols. Morel informs the audience that ‘L’Indochine [...] est la première de nous rester fidèle.’ The camera then cuts to more scenes of local beauty, including the Indochinese countryside, where the Emperor is shown looking out across the rural landscape, before the camera cuts again to an industrial district. The bustling factories are, Morel records, thanks to France, for ‘en Indochine [...] la France a apporté de l’aide industrielle.’ The camera pans across to reveal a huge port being constructed and we are told ‘les Français maintiendront la souveraineté nationale—restée entière après les accords franco-japonnais de juillet 1941.’ This is the sole reference to the presence of the Japanese in Indochina in the film, plays down the importance of the Japanese occupation, while simultaneously playing up French control over Indochinese affairs. Despite the apparent importance of the French, reinforced through scenes of military officers boarding a ship at the same fledgling port, followed by shots of the Governor-General, Decour, inspecting naval vessels and a full review of troops, the opening sequence of the film is thus misleading. Not only does it effectively suggest that the French are the only military power in the country, where the Japanese in fact had a strong foothold, but the scenes of French military prowess underplay these officers’ subservience to their Japanese counterparts; French officers were in fact obliged to salute whenever they encountered a Japanese soldier of any rank.⁷⁸ Although the Japanese had in principle agreed to respect French sovereignty in the initial agreement of September 1940,⁷⁹ by July 1941 they were making increasing use of French resources to build up supplies in preparation for the war in the east.⁸⁰ Yet this scene, with the *tricolore* flying above the French military parade, nevertheless maintained that, under Pétain, the French military was

⁷⁸ Colin Smith, p.299

⁷⁹ See Robert O. Paxton, p.78

⁸⁰ Colin Smith, p.285

still in control in Indochina, while also emphasising the continuity of the *mission civilisatrice* developed in *Dakar*. As the troops stand to attention, a group of Indochinese civilians watch the military in awe and not only are these local people poorly-clothed, but they are positioned in a physically-inferior position to the white French soldiers. Unlike in *Dakar*, this is less a question of careful camera angles than a reflection of the discrepancy in height between the French soldiers and the Indochinese. The message is nonetheless the same, namely that French colonial supremacy in south-east Asia continues as it did before the Occupation.

The camera then cuts to a subtitle which reads simply 'l'Afrique française.' Opening with an image of daily life in Algiers, Morel informs the audience that: 'Il a fallu la défaite [...] pour que la France comprenne la source de sa mission coloniale.' This line is a clear statement of Naintré's and Morel's views on the importance of the Empire under Vichy, namely that Pétain's government has not only maintained the *mission civilisatrice* but it is also exploiting the Empire for all its worth as (according to the voiceover) never before. The scenes of life in the Kasbah, including Muslim Algerians shopping, sipping tea and walking through the narrow streets, are intended to demonstrate the vitality of Algeria, which, Morel reminds the viewer, is 'véritablement partie intégrale de la France.' The next scene demonstrates the exploitation of Algeria's resources for the French viewer, and 'malgré le blocus, l'Afrique du Nord nous ravitaille, nous alimente.' As goods are loaded by cranes onto freight boats, including huge barrels of wine, the camera cuts to a flock of sheep that is being herded on board a smaller vessel destined for France. The whole of the top deck of this ship is filled with pens of sheep bound for the motherland. Under Pétain, then, Algeria is feeding the mainland with wine and sheep, emphasising the harnessing of the Empire's resources by the Vichy government. For viewers in the Unoccupied Zone, this scene demonstrates the clear material benefits of the continuity of the Empire, and indeed the efforts of the Marshal to ensure that the French people are well-fed. The choice of wine as the product featured in this scene, is also something of a reinforcement of the French colonial model, since it

demonstrates the cultivation of a product in Algeria which, given the dietary requirements of Islam, only the minority European settler population was likely to consume. This not only reinforces the impression that the Empire is helping to supply France, but also underlines that French customs are still enforced on local populations under the new regime.

French superiority is developed further in the next sequence, which is heralded by triumphal orchestral music. Morel proudly announces that: ‘construire—cet idéal ne fut-il pas toujours celui de la légion étrangère, héroïque nomade qui planta le drapeau français de Mexique à Indochine?’ The French Foreign Legion is shown marching through the streets of Algiers, with local children following the parade. A crowd of Muslim Algerians has gathered on either side of the street. As in the scenes in Indochina, the contrast between the Foreign Legion and the local population is palpable for the Muslim Algerians are poorly-dressed and are physically inferior to the French troops in another reinforcement of the continuity of the French colonial model. The *légionnaires* carry the *tricolore* aloft as they march into a parade ground. Morel notes that these men ‘venus de tous les ciels du monde servir sous le drapeau français ne connaissent que la loi, la discipline et le travail.’ The soldiers stand to attention in a physical manifestation of French military strength, as an officer, having inspected his men, salutes the *tricolore* which is raised slowly over the parade ground as the *Marseillaise* begins to play.

This scene of French military prowess emphasises again, as in Indochina, the importance of the flag as a unifying symbol to men from across the world who have chosen to serve France. The continued presence of the *tricolore* and the *Marseillaise*, which was also, by the time of the Occupation, considered to be *the* national anthem by the majority of the French population—‘plus que jamais l’hymne officiel’ in Michel Vovelle’s assessment⁸¹—offers reassurance of the continuity of the French colonial model and French strength in Algeria. This part of North Africa remains, as Morel insists, an integral part of France. The impact of the national anthem in this sequence of the documentary, used in conjunction with the

⁸¹ Michel Vovelle, p.126

tricolore and with scenes of powerful, fit young men, is intended to reinforce the continuity of tradition despite the upheaval of the Occupation. Like the *tricolore*, the anthem was banned from the Occupied Zone.⁸² For viewers of *Fidélité* watching in the Unoccupied Zone, the knowledge that the anthem was still played in Algiers might have offset the reality that it could not be played in their own capital city.

As with each of the documentaries discussed in this chapter, it is important to examine what does *not* feature in the film. The comforting and moderate portrayal of the Vichy regime which appears in *Fidélité* is rendered possible only through the exclusion of some inconvenient realities and some potentially divisive policies. While Anglophobia is downplayed, so too are other forms of French-specific exclusion; there is no reference to anti-Semitism or to exclusion against religious minorities in France. Indeed, there is even the suggestion that religion is secondary to service to the nation, to the *mère patrie*, in a sequence which takes place on the hillside above Tangiers, in which local people are shown to have died serving France, and the camera lingers briefly on the image of Muslim graves. Thus despite the second *Statut des Juifs* in June 1941, the film appears to ignore religious divides and concentrate above all on unity, the term evoked in the part of Pétain's speech where he comments 'l'unité de la France [...] doit rester intacte.' Collaboration, another potentially divisive theme, which had gained significant ground under Darlan with the signing of the Paris Protocols in March 1941, is likewise ignored in Naintré's film. Whereas 1941 was, in fact, a year in which Vichy moved closer to being an extreme-right and exclusionary regime, the vision projected in *Fidélité* was altogether more comforting and reassuring. Other inconveniences are also overlooked for example the sections on Indochina lack any reference to the Japanese presence there, while Tunisia, with its near-total occupation by Italian forces, is ignored altogether.

Naintré's film appears, then, to have sought to offer an image of comforting reassurance, especially to bourgeois viewers, with the continuity of the Empire in place of a realistic or

⁸² Robert Gildea, p.145

accurate representation of the Vichy regime. As with other documentary films, this tendency for deception is a characteristic of propaganda widely identified by scholars in the field and is thus to some extent unsurprising. It is, though, important to examine how Naintré's film compared with other contemporary propaganda. In 1941, local radio stations, including Radio-Toulouse, began to include anti-Semitic radio programmes and the Radio-Toulouse example is especially vitriolic, with its frequent claims that Jews should be deported.⁸³

Naintré's portrayal of the Empire in *Fidélité* is, in fact, far from vitriolic, unlike contemporary local radio. As the former director of Paramount's pre-war newsreel, Naintré was fundamentally a film professional, not a politician. In promoting the continuity of the Empire in his film, he was defying the radicalisation of Vichy's policies which was reflected in the content of local radio in 1941, and national radio from 1942.

Naintré was, like Coupan before him, echoing the widely-held sentiments of the French audience that the Empire was to be treasured and his sympathetic portrayal of the French colonial model, which maintains the superiority of white French settlers whilst downplaying challenges to the success of the Empire, suggests that Naintré shared these views. The incorporation of Pétain's speech into the film might also hint at sympathy for the Marshal in line with the opinions of many French people in 1941 and as Laborie records, 'la légitimité populaire du maréchal Pétain entre [...] dans la magie du symbolique.'⁸⁴ On the other hand, there is nothing in *Fidélité* to suggest that Naintré was an active collaborationist. The ignoring of many contemporary realities, from the checks on the French imperial vision portrayed so grandly in the film, to anti-Semitic measures, suggests that Naintré was, like Coupan and the SGI's documentary film supervisor-cum-narrator Morel, a filmmaker determined to focus on a subject in which his audience could take solace. Naintré did no harm to either his own career or the commercial success of the film by focussing on a positive theme. Indeed, the commercial success of the film is testament to the very real desire to see films about the Empire on the part of audiences in the Unoccupied Zone. In

⁸³ See script of Radio-Toulouse programme written by M. Colmet-Dage, 22/11/1941, CDJC XCIX-48

⁸⁴ Pierre Laborie, p.256

addition to its popularity in Lyons, *Fidélité* proved especially popular in Marseille, where it played from the 18th to the 24th December 1942 and grossed 141,744.80 francs in just three days, easily making a profit on its initial cost.⁸⁵ The time of the year and the cold might to some extent explain this success in Marseille. Nevertheless, the film was also successful in Cap Martin in the spring of 1942,⁸⁶ which does appear to support Blanchard and Boëtsch's assertion that the Empire was widely supported by the French people. There is, then, such an overwhelming emphasis on the importance of Empire, and such a wide variety of case studies in the film, that it is possible that Naintré, as a middle-class professional typical of his own cinema audience, also identified with such a comforting vision of France away from the realities of the Occupation.

Investing in the maintenance of the Empire: Méditerranée/Niger

Naintré's work on *Fidélité* emphasised the importance of the Empire to the Vichy authorities, harnessed as a unifying and comforting theme in the film, just as it was in Jean Coupan's *Dakar*. The continued loyalty towards France by the Empire's population is further emphasised in *Méditerranée/Niger*, which also emphasises the continued strength of the French army and French engineering prowess. As in both of these other documentaries, *Méditerranée/Niger* strives for a comforting tone, associating the personality of the Marshal with the engineering and military success of Vichy France. The Empire is also portrayed as a mutually-beneficial arrangement; not only does the Empire provide material resources for France, but France is shown contributing to the infrastructure of the Empire. Yet as with *Dakar* and *Fidélité*, *Méditerranée/Niger*, whose director is unknown, fails to represent the realities of the contemporary political situation in France and across the Empire. The French military presence in North Africa, which is continuously emphasised in the documentary, contrasts with the reality of the limited army permitted under the Armistice in Metropolitan France, in the same way as the apparently indefatigable French army in *Dakar* and *Fidélité*

⁸⁵ See report by M. Thuillier in the SGI, 18/06/1943, AN F41 92

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

simply does not reflect the military reality of the Occupation. While the reality of Algeria, with its two-tier state in which the white European settlers benefited from greater political and economic power,⁸⁷ is acknowledged through the consistent physical positioning of Muslim Algerians in inferior positions to white soldiers and engineers, the other realities of the Occupation, such as the material hardships and rationing experienced on the mainland, and the occupations of Tunisia by the Italians, and Indochina by the Japanese, are ignored altogether. The film is thus another pertinent example of the emphasis on a more reassuring and more consensual version of the National Revolution in Vichy documentary film, especially when compared with the German version of the film which appeared in the *Actualités-Mondiales* and the printed promotion of the same event which appeared in the almanac *Mers et colonies*, both of which ignored the continuities between life under Vichy and life under the Republic.

Ostensibly a celebration of the recent opening of a new train line in Algeria from Algiers to Colomb-Béchar, *Méditerranée/Niger* is above all an opportunity for the *Secrétaire d'état des colonies*, the film's sponsors, and the film's unnamed director, to link explicitly French technical strength, in the form of the new railway line, to military power. The film also reflects later films, including *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, in that it promotes the value of work in addition to emphasising the continued strength of *la patrie* under Vichy. The importance of work in ensuring France's imagined strength in the world dominates the final section of the documentary. The opening of the film, by contrast, focusses above all on the superiority of the French military over the Muslim Algerian populace and the subservience of local dignitaries to the white French authorities. As with *Dakar* and *Fidélité* the French colonial model is shown to be alive and well in Algeria, and thus had the potential to offer reassurance to audiences supportive of the continuity of the Empire.

The film opens with a series of shots focussing on the Algerian landscape, before cutting to a parade of North African *tirailleurs* who are marking the opening of the first section of the

⁸⁷ See for example Martin Evans, p.22

line. The Algerian troops form a guard of honour for the visiting Vichy dignitaries. The apparent support of the local military authorities is then complemented by a show of support from the local civilian populace, in which Joseph Berthelot, the Minister for Industrial Production, is pictured meeting villagers from Bou-Arfa at the first junction of the new line. Local men perform a ceremonial dance for the Minister in a further show of apparent popularity and support for the regime.

In a further military scene, Algerian men on horseback ride alongside the train in a cavalry charge, firing their rifles in salute. This shot reinforces the links between North African customs, in the form of the cavalry charge, and Vichy's engineering exploits, juxtaposing the new train line with the traditional travelling method of the horse. On arrival at the train's new destination of Colomb-Béchar, there is a further military ceremony in which French and native soldiers troop the colour. The voiceover proclaims that these Algerians have come to salute 'les réalisateurs de la Méditerranée/Niger.' Once again, the co-operation between the Vichy authorities and the local populace is highlighted, emphasising the support enjoyed by the regime *outré-mer*. This support and apparent mutual respect between the Vichy regime in the *métropole* and inhabitants of France's overseas territories reflects the content of other contemporary Vichy-produced documentaries. In his analysis of the 1942 film, *La Garde de l'Empire de l'Atlantique au Tchad*,⁸⁸ Steve Wharton identifies a projection of France as a 'benevolent colonialist' power. Interestingly, as in *Méditerranée/Niger*, Wharton argues that in *La Garde de l'Empire*:

'The relationship between coloniser and colonised is sentimentalised and idealised as one of mutual obligation and respect, while, at the same time, the superiority and condescension of the French colonial power is never placed in doubt.'⁸⁹

In *Méditerranée/Niger*, as in *La Garde de l'Empire*, the Algerian cavalry charge, in particular, which marks the opening of the new railway, signifies the respect of the

⁸⁸ *La garde de l'empire de l'Atlantique au Tchad* (Dir: Unknown, 1942)

⁸⁹ Steve Wharton, p.113

colonised, in this case Muslim Algerians, for the French, while the involvement of Vichy civilian and military leaders in turn projects a respect for the colonised. Berthelot is deliberately pictured meeting local people, while the military ceremonies are noticeably joint affairs, in which both Algerian and French soldiers participate. This cooperation suggests the inclusion of the colonised in the Vichy project, an inclusion which Wharton also notes in *La Garde de l'Empire*. Regardless of their differences, the Algerians in *Méditerranée/Niger*, through showing their appreciation for the new railway, are shown to be participating in the National Revolution. While the French are shown to be ultimately superior in the film, the local population seems nevertheless willing to play a lowlier role in the regime's plans. The message is, therefore, that despite their different religion and traditions, Muslim Algerians are still very welcome to contribute to the success of the Empire under Vichy, provided that they play an inferior role to their white French colonisers. For audiences in the Unoccupied Zone, the film therefore offered further reassurance that the promotion of superior French values, in line with the *mission civilisatrice*, continued to exist under Pétain, despite the upheaval of the defeat, and despite the presence of German troops on French soil.

In addition to the apparent mutual respect emphasised in the film, *Méditerranée/Niger* also projects France as a strong military power under Vichy, focussing closely on the French soldiers who meet the train at Colomb-Béchar. The strength of France in the region is confirmed in the closing line of the film, with the voiceover claiming that 'la Méditerranée/Niger ne sera plus un mythe. Le gouvernement du Maréchal l'aura voulue et l'aura créée.' The version of France under Pétain presented in the film is therefore one of a strong military nation, with no hint of the Occupation, nor, indeed of the wider war, unlike in *Dakar* where the collapse of June 1940 is at least acknowledged. The narrator repeatedly underlines the success of the train's first voyage to its new destination, suggesting that the project will bring 'plus de confort, plus de richesse' to the local people, thus playing to the broad support for engineering prowess amongst pre-Occupation pressure groups identified

by Jackie Clarke.⁹⁰ Despite this assertion, however, the local populace does not appear entirely at ease with the arrival of the train and at no point is a Muslim Algerian pictured boarding the train. Rather, the only passengers that are shown inside the train are French civilian and military personnel. This is, therefore, a further informative example of the role of the voiceover in this film, much as in both *Dakar* and *Fidélité* and indeed in later Vichy documentaries. Although the inhabitants of Colomb-Béchar appear either bemused or apprehensive when confronted with the train, the voiceover proclaims that it will benefit them and other local towns, in direct opposition to what seems to be conveyed in the actual images in the film. The intention of the voiceover here is to reinforce the mutual appreciation enjoyed between the Vichy authorities and the local populace, an idea which is emphasised in the military and civilian ceremonies at both Bou-Arfa and Colomb-Béchar. Unlike those examples, however, the images here do not reflect the content of the voiceover, which, in fact, undermines the narrator's assertions. The relationship between narration and image in this sequence is therefore at odds, rendering this particular section of the documentary less effective than the rest of the film. Where it is conceivable that audiences would believe that Vichy enjoyed support in Algeria when confronted with images of military salutes and civilian dances, the persuasive value of the documentary is undermined when this idea of support is not reinforced with a matching image.

Nevertheless, the remainder of the documentary does not make any further mismatches between the voiceover and accompanying images. Instead, the portrayal of the value of work is emphasised persuasively in the final sequences of the documentary. It is interesting to note that the film captures several images of manual labour only *after* emphasising the support enjoyed by Pétain's government in Algeria. The final 40 seconds of the film are, in fact, dedicated solely to the representation of work and engineering success. The documentary shifts noticeably, both geographically and thematically, after the train is pictured at Colomb-Béchar. The next sequence of the film features a mine just beyond Colomb-Béchar, where

⁹⁰ Jackie Clarke, pp.30-34

coal is dug to power the train. The documentary captures a series of shots of hard manual labour, opening with Algerian men pushing carts of rubble up a slag heap. In the next shot, more men are pictured mining the ground, and in the following image a group of men dig trenches for the rails. This is followed by a shot of men physically lifting a rail into place. Although some heavy machinery is pictured in the distance, the emphasis here is on physical, manual work.



Figures 2 and 3: Algerian labourers toil in the heat while their white French overseers look on from a physically superior position at the top of the hill. At the opening of the Colomb-Béchar line by Bethelot, the *tricolore* is run up to mark this French engineering triumph. Images reproduced with kind permission of INA.

It is interesting that the documentary's unknown director⁹¹ chose to focus closely on images of hard work in this final section of the documentary. This hard, manual labour is carried out, crucially, by indigenous Algerians and not the Vichy military or French civilians who also appear in the film. While French engineers have planned the new railway, the documentary makes it clear that *Algerian*, not French, hard work has allowed this engineering vision to become a reality. There are two possible explanations for this focus on Algerian workers. The first is that these images reinforce French colonial supremacy in the region and thus offer further evidence of the continuity of the *mission civilisatrice*. The French civilian and military figures in the film perform symbolic tasks, like tightening the

⁹¹ Jean-Pierre Bértin-Maghit records that no details of the director or producers of the film has ever been found. (p.228) The present author has not found any further details of the film in archival research to date.

final bolt in the railway outside Bou-Arfa, or meeting local people in both Bou-Arfa and Colomb-Béchar. Berthelot and the Governor-General of Algiers, General Chattel, are pictured inspecting the new tracks in a supervisory manner, creating the impression that the French dignitaries are above such manual labour. The French are viewed throughout the film in smart uniforms or three-piece suits, whereas the Algerians are pictured wearing thin robes suitable for work.

At the mine, the French are positioned on top of a hill, along which, the narrator informs the audience, the next section of the train line will run. The dignitaries are viewed from the mine itself, with the camera looking up towards the gathered French, thus establishing a physical superiority over the Algerian workers. At no point does the film show the French in the mine. To audiences in the Unoccupied Zone, then, this reinforces the notion that the French are very much superior in North Africa, in keeping with the importance of the *mission civilisatrice*. Although mainland France is partly occupied by the Germans, Italian military units are based in Tunisia, and the Japanese are the dominant authority in Indochina, there is no hint in the film that France is anything other than a strong power; as with *Dakar* and *Fidélité*, many realities of the Occupation are completely ignored in the film. The version of reality projected here is one in which France has retained her world power status and is the supreme power in her colonies. In the same way that *Fidélité* maintains that all parts of the Empire remain loyal to France under Pétain, there is no suggestion in *Méditerranée/Niger* of any dissent within the Empire, despite the small number of African countries which rallied to the Free French before 1941.⁹² The Empire and the *mission civilisatrice*, therefore, remain firmly intact, emphasising that life continues much as it did before under Pétain, and thus providing further comfort for audiences in the Unoccupied Zone.

⁹² Colonies that rallied to de Gaulle's Free French movement included Chad, under its influential Governor-General, Félix Éboué, in August 1940. Cameroon and the modern-day Central African Republic were easily persuaded to support the Free French when Général Leclerc arrived with a handful of Free French volunteers to take over the colonies. See Jonathan Fenby, *The General: Charles de Gaulle and the France he saved* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2010) p.149

The second explanation for the images of hard, manual labour in the film is that this offers a model to the same French audiences. The result of this physical effort is the creation of the railway, which will develop the infrastructure in this important colony and, although this is not acknowledged in the film, ensure greater French control over rural Algeria. There is therefore a link between hard work and the status of the French nation and this labour has directly benefited French international standing. For the French audience of the film, the implicit suggestion is that this same level of manual, physical labour will also benefit mainland France. There are clear parallels between the imagery of work in the later films *Travail* and *Nourrir la France*, explored later in this chapter and those in *Méditerranée/Niger*. In both 1942 films, the value of work for both the individual and the nation is emphasised, and the version of work presented is, on the whole, one of physical effort. There is a particular link between the mining for coal by hand in *Méditerranée/Niger* and the ploughing of the land by hand in *Nourrir la France*. In both films there is an absence of machinery in the scenes of work, suggesting that hard, physical labour should be emulated by the French. It is noticeable that while it is Algerians who are pictured working in *Méditerranée/Niger*, the workers in the other two films are from mainland France. Work is not, therefore, above ordinary French people when it takes place on the mainland. In this manner, the Algerian work ethic acts as a template for the French, in line with the suggestion amongst some pre-Occupation engineers that hard work and good planning could help to build a strong nation.⁹³ Although physical work does not appear to bring personal benefit to the Algerians, the suggestion is that such effort will help to maintain the French nation, again offering the reassurance to audiences in the Unoccupied Zone that the Empire is still working and making a contribution to the French way of life under Vichy.

Closer to reality? The ligne transsaharienne in other propaganda

One of the principal research questions in this thesis is whether Vichy documentary film offers a substantially different take on life under Vichy in its promotion of the National

⁹³ See Jackie Clarke, pp.30-34

Revolution compared with other forms of propaganda. *Méditerranée/Niger* offers an especially informative opportunity to apply this research question. Not only was the subject of the film reproduced in two further forms of propaganda, in the German-produced *Actualités-Mondiales* and in printed form in a commemorative almanac produced for the event, but the treatment of this same event differs on every occasion. It was, in fact, not uncommon for the Vichy and German authorities to exchange audiovisual material during the course of the Occupation, a process which began with the Vichy authorities exporting images of the bombardment of Mers-el-Kébir to the Germans for use in *Actualités-Mondiales*, *Méditerranée/Niger*.⁹⁴ The section of *Méditerranée/Niger* that appeared in *Actualités-Mondiales* is, indeed, no different from other Vichy pictures that were reproduced in the German newsreel, but the fact that the German authorities included the report at all demonstrates that even the *Propaganda Abteilung* realised the importance of the Empire for the French audience in the Occupied Zone.⁹⁵ However, while the topic is the same as in the original documentary, there are some notable changes, and the presentation of the opening of the new railway line shifts more towards an emphasis on the mundane activity of mining in the Empire than a promotion of the continuity of the French colonial model. The narrator is different, still male, but more abrupt, and the commentary itself is far quicker. With the exception of the opening line of the piece, the text of the commentary is an exact replica of the original, yet the montage is much shorter than the full documentary. It is also important that news of the opening of the railway reached audiences in the Occupied Zone in 1942, the year after the original documentary was produced. The images of hard work are, though, retained in the *Actualités-Mondiales* montage, with the inclusion of the shots of miners and

⁹⁴ The Vichy images of the Mers-el-Kébir attacks featured in *Actualités Mondiales* on 23rd October 1940, under the heading 'Opération Catapult à Mers-el-Kébir,' INA AFE85000143. For more detail on this particular exchange, see the critical commentary ('Chroniques des actualités cinématographiques') by Olivier Wieviorka, Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit and Sylvie Lindeperg in the INA-produced DVD *Images de Guerre 1940-1945* (Dir: Wieviorka, Bertin-Maghit and Lindeperg, 2002).

⁹⁵ The excerpts from the *Méditerranée/Niger* film appeared in *Actualités Mondiales* on 30th January 1942, under the different title 'Le Transaharien: inauguration du premier tronçon Méditerranée – Niger'. INA AFE85000676

the lifting and positioning of rails. The value of hard work is thus promoted in the German production as wholeheartedly as in the Vichy film.

Crucially, however, all military references are removed in the German newsreel piece. The ceremonies in the desert at Bou-Arfa and Colomb-Béchar are deleted entirely. The cavalry charge is absent, as is the trooping of the colour. Interestingly, a shot of Berthelot in the new train that appears in the opening of the film, before the arrival at Bou-Arfa, is shown in the newsreel piece, but not the images of his companion Général Chattel; even an unarmed General is omitted from the newsreel sequence. Thus any reference to French military control in Algeria, and any suggestions of Vichy popularity, is removed. The only images of the Algerian people seen in the *Actualités Mondiales* piece are labourers, while Berthelot is only ever pictured inside the train, ensuring that the civil and military ceremonies, with their show of mutual admiration between the Algerians and the Vichy authorities, were not broadcast to the audience in the Occupied Zone.

Deprived of the images of military strength, either French or Algerian, the film becomes more a study of mining in rural Algeria than a portrayal of French colonial power. Although, as with the original film, there is no mention of the Occupation or the wider war, there are only two references to French political authority during the sequence. The first is the presence of Berthelot as Minister for Industrial Production, and the second is the closing line of the piece which is copied *verbatim* from the original: 'Le gouvernement du Maréchal aura voulu [la ligne Méditerranée/Niger] et l'aura créée.' There is, then, at least a subtle acknowledgement of the existence of the Vichy government. The appearance of autonomy created in the original film, with the focus on military ceremonies and the French control of Algerian work, is, though, shattered. In a further dent to the myth of French colonial power promulgated in the original film, the same *Actualités Mondiales* newsreel emphasises the military strength of the Germans. After a series of items on *faits divers*, including ice skating in Berlin and a cross-country run in the Bois de Boulogne, the newsreel features the latest developments on the Eastern Front. In these reports, German and Romanian troops are seen

beating Soviet soldiers in hand-to-hand fighting in Sebastopol. The voiceover even proclaims that ‘Les Bolcheviques reculent.’ It should be noted that this piece, like other items on the German war effort that featured in *Actualités Mondiales* were produced centrally in Germany under the auspices of the *Auslandstonwoche* (ATW) production. These images were then absorbed into local newsreel productions, like *Actualités Mondiales*.⁹⁶ Although by no means exceptional in an edition of *Actualités Mondiales*, these images of German military supremacy in the east contrast sharply with the lack of military power in the repackaged version of *Méditerranée/Niger*. Where the original film projected an autonomous and militarily powerful France under Vichy, to the French of the Occupied Zone the edited images simply reaffirmed the daily realities of the Occupation, in which the Vichy authorities played a very small role.

That is not to suggest, however, that the repackaged version of *Méditerranée/Niger* is devoid of any ideological content. The Algiers–Colomb-Béchar railway is still presented as an engineering triumph and is directly accredited, as in the original, to Pétain’s government. There is no attempt on the part of the German production team to claim any credit for the project for the Nazis. There is still a sense in the *Actualités Mondiales* piece that this is an achievement for France and it is worth noting that a line from the voiceover recording the future role of France in the region is retained. The narrator states that, with the planned extension to the line beyond Colomb-Béchar, France’s ‘volonté et son travail’ will create ‘une nouvelle organisation de [la] richesse [de la France] et de ses responsabilités’. It is apparent, even in the German-produced newsreel, that the train line will benefit the French nation. The images of labour in the mines and on the future extension to the tracks, along with references to French work (‘son travail’) are retained. The report is thus not completely lacking in propaganda value for Vichy, but it shifts from a film dedicated to promoting France’s international role to one in which the benefit of hard work is the main thrust.

⁹⁶ In total, the Propaganda Abteilung exported seventeen versions of ATW in twenty-two languages at the height of German control across the globe. Brett Bowles, p.422

Although any allusion of French autonomy is effectively destroyed in the film, the report is nevertheless a dedicated portrayal of Vichy's value of work.

The repackaging of the original *Méditerranée/Niger* film is an informative insight into the focus on everyday life under Pétain in documentary film. The military imagery in the original piece presented a strong colonial nation with clear influence in North Africa. The documentary gives the impression that Vichy is an autonomous power, with no suggestion that two-thirds of mainland France is occupied. The opening of the new railway is conducted as though there is no worldwide conflict, nor indeed fierce fighting elsewhere on the African continent.⁹⁷ In the original film, the *mission civilisatrice* is thriving under Vichy and does not appear to be under any threat. Yet in the *Actualités Mondiales* version, the time dedicated to the Vichy authorities, in the persona of Berthelot, reflects Vichy's real importance in the world and it amounts to just five seconds of screen time. An alternative reality is constructed in the film destined for the Unoccupied Zone, in which France has never ceased to be a strong nation. In the edited news item, though, this alternative reality is destroyed. The steep contrast between the presentation of the new railway in the Vichy-produced documentary and in the German-produced newsreel is an illuminating insight into much Vichy-produced film. In each of the Vichy documentaries discussed in this chapter, everyday reality is put on hold, in order to suggest that many aspects of life continue under Vichy in the same way as they did before the Occupation.

That the German-produced newsreel took a different approach to the original Vichy documentary can be explained by the competing objectives of the *Propaganda Abteilung*'s *Auslandstonwoche*, which was shown across occupied Europe. While the report did acknowledge the efforts of the French in Algeria, thus providing some form of comfort for audiences in the Occupied Zone, it was nevertheless far less complimentary than the original

⁹⁷ The 'War in the Desert' raged across Africa from late 1940. Tank and infantry battles between Allied and Italian and German forces took place in Egypt and Libya throughout 1941, the year of *Méditerranée/Niger*. See Jon E. Lewis, *World War II: The Autobiography* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2009) p.131

Vichy piece. More remarkable, however, was the difference in approach between the original documentary and the subsequent printed material produced by the same government ministry that commissioned *Méditerranée/Niger*, the *Secrétaire d'état des colonies*. In an almanac produced for the occasion in 1941,⁹⁸ the *tricolore* is absent from the pictures of the opening of the new railway, which focuses exclusively on the engineering feat of the French, and downplays the militaristic aspects of the documentary. Perhaps like the *Actualités-Mondiales* report, this almanac might well have been released in the Occupied Zone, and thus arguably the images of French military prowess are overlooked for fear of provoking the wrath of German authorities. In any case, the almanac underlines the importance of the cinema for offering an outlet for comforting and moderate images of life under Vichy which stressed the continuities with the pre-Occupation era. Where cinema audiences sought distraction from everyday life, and the SGI recruited filmmakers who were willing to serve this interest, the printed word was an altogether different context, and lacked the same opportunities for escapism as the cinema.

This need for escapism might well explain the decision of the unknown director of *Méditerranée/Niger* to produce a film which offered a reassuring vision of the Empire under Pétain. The direct link between the railway line and the Marshal in the final sequence of the film may, as with *Naintré*, hint at some form of sympathy and support for Pétain.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on the continuity of the French colonial model in the same vein as the years before the Occupation would suggest that the maker of *Méditerranée/Niger* was keen to reflect the interests of the audience, especially those who were sympathetic to the maintenance of the colonial model. In the same way as *Naintré*'s decision to make a film which promoted a strong version of the French Empire was only likely to increase sales amongst an audience which was largely supportive of colonialism, *Méditerranée/Niger*'s director was in many ways meeting the demands of the audience. The lack of references to the political realities of 1941, especially anti-Semitism and the same checks on the Empire

⁹⁸ 'La semaine de la France d'outre-mer,' *Mer et Colonies*, July 1941, pp.11-12. The almanac can be found in file AN F41 85

which are ignored in *Fidélité*, arguably reflects the more consensual sentiments on the part of the filmmaker, and perhaps then the same support as other middle-class professionals for the Empire. Above all, however, the fact that the SGI permitted the production of *Méditerranée/Niger*, with its signals of a strong colonial France, where the makers of the printed almanac downplayed these same images, offers evidence of a lack of conviction on the part of the SGI leadership with regards to Vichy's more exclusionary ideals and legislation, and certainly a willingness to allow filmmakers to produce films which did not necessarily promote the regime's political line.

Healthy bodies, healthy nation: the reassuring presence of youth and protection of the family in Jeunes de France

Both *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger* offered reassurance to audiences of the continued strength and loyalty of the Empire in 1941. Such reassurance was, however, also to be found in films whose subject was the *métropole*. Despite the increasingly exclusionary actions of Pétain's government in 1941, with the introduction of the second *Statut des Juifs* in June and the signing of the Paris Protocols in May, and an ever-decreasing rationing allowance, reduced to 275g of bread per day in April 1941,⁹⁹ filmmakers still discovered subjects to offer some form of comfort to the Unoccupied Zone audience. Of potentially non-divisive themes, young people offered an opportunity to remind viewers that French physical prowess, and age-old traditions, continued under Pétain despite the realities of the Occupation. In the same manner as *Dakar*, *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger*, *Jeunes de France* directed by Philippe Este, the Director-General of *FAPG*, ignores much of the uncomfortable and inconvenient realities of daily life. Thus rationing, the presence of the Germans, collaboration and anti-Semitism are overlooked in preference for a comforting and consensual portrayal of youth movements under Vichy. Despite the uniforms displayed by the members of the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse*, the film is devoid of the authoritarian overtones of contemporary German-produced propaganda films such as *Soldaten von*

⁹⁹ See Eric Alary et al (Eds.), *Les Français au quotidien, 1939-1949*, p.159

Morgen,¹⁰⁰ which emphasises the discipline of the Hitler Youth in contrast to British children. *Jeunes de France* is instead a celebration not only of the physical prowess of French young people, but also of rural traditions; where young men do appear on a parade ground in Vichy, they still appear informal and relaxed rather than highly disciplined. In fact, the film is closer to the portrayal of the British Air Cadets and Girl Guides in the charming British documentary film, *Holmfirth in Wartime*,¹⁰¹ except that in *Jeunes de France* girls feature only in domestic or maternal settings, not as part of the *Chantiers* movement. Nevertheless, Este appears to strive for a reassuring and moderate vision of life for French youth, emphasising the continuity of French national strength in line with the interests of cinema audiences, which is at odds with some aspects to Vichy's political agenda in 1941, especially the strengthening and expansion of anti-Semitic legislation in June. The strong focus on the importance of family values in the film, and especially the idea of the younger generation serving the elderly, reflected the wider support for traditional family values, which received strong support from the French bourgeoisie, and indeed from most politicians. The concept of strong traditional family units and traditional gender roles was one which offered reminders to audiences of a time before the Occupation.

Jeunes de France, then, sought to draw on the popularity of the family amongst French audiences, while also offering images of a physically strong French youth. The film, comprised of a montage of reports from *FAPG*, was co-produced by the newsreel and the Service du Cinéma Éducatif de la Jeunesse, whose aim was to provide a model to which young people could aspire.¹⁰² As if to emphasise that the family and French youth are being nourished under Pétain across France, without explicitly noting that this only concerns the Unoccupied Zone, the film cuts repeatedly between different locations, comparing the actions of members of the *Chantiers* movement in Hyères, in Provence, with their colleagues at Vichy, Lodève, Vaucluse and Périgueux. Archival research has uncovered no details of

¹⁰⁰ *Soldaten von Morgen* (Dir: Alfred Weidenmann, 1941) IWM MGH 494

¹⁰¹ *Holmfirth in wartime* (Dir: Kathleen Lockwood, 1940) IWM MGH 3580-6

¹⁰² Details of the film's production are held at the CNC, film number 38776

the financial arrangements of *Jeunes de France*, but it would seem likely that the film followed a similar pattern to other documentaries distributed by Pathé, like *Fidélité* and *Un an de la Révolution nationale*, whose funding was divided between Pathé and the SGI with a split of 30% and 70% respectively.¹⁰³ The emphasis on the youth of the *Chantiers* in the film, and the involvement of the *Service du Cinéma Educatif de la Jeunesse*, accredited in the opening titles, suggests a considerable level of involvement on the part of the Vichy authorities in commissioning *Jeunes de France*. Nevertheless, it is clear that the SGI placed their faith in Este to produce film propaganda for the Vichy regime, leading him to produce two additional documentaries comprised of previous *FAPG* reports, notably *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* and *Un an de la Révolution nationale*. While Coupan sat on the *Conseil d'Administration* of the newsreel in the guise of censor for the SGI, this did not necessarily reduce the level of autonomy enjoyed by Este; indeed, as Coupan's trajectory suggests, *Dakar* was one of his first forays into directing film, and therefore he was by no means sufficiently experienced to control Este, the former director of the *Pathé-Journal* newsreel. Este's technique in *Jeunes de France* of interchanging shots from one location to another was, in any event, replicated again in both *Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* and *Un an de la Révolution nationale*, which seems to suggest that this style of film met with Coupan's approval. As with Coupan's own *Dakar*, there is nothing in *Jeunes de France* that suggests any distance from the Vichy regime; rather the film consistently promotes the strength of the French nation under Pétain, emphasising the importance of the traditional family unit for maintaining French prestige at home. Like all three of the films previously discussed in this chapter, there is also no reference to the presence of the German occupiers, again offering a comforting vision of France without the realities of the Occupation and emulating the approach taken by Coupan, Naintré and the unknown director of *Méditerranée/Niger* in emphasising the consensual, and apparently more inclusive, side of Vichy's vision of the family and youth.

¹⁰³ On the funding of *Fidélité* see 'Note sur le film *Fidélité*,' 18/06/1943. AN F41 92

The sense of reassuring normality is sustained throughout the film, beginning with the opening sequence in which a small group of young people from the *Chantiers* raises the *tricolore* at a parade ground in Hyères. From the very first shot, the film suggests continuity with the pre-Vichy era and the raising of the flag is accompanied by a triumphal fanfare, impressing on the viewer the importance of the nation. The camera then cuts to a larger group of youth from the *Chantiers* on parade in their slacks and pullovers. The voiceover immediately informs the audience that these are the young men who will continue to maintain French pride, describing the group as ‘ces jeunes de futurs chantiers qui abordent l’espoir de demain.’ In the next scene, the camera shows a young man asleep in his hammock, dreaming, according to the narrator, of ‘une vie simple, en contact continu avec la nature, le travail et la simplicité.’ Immediately, the camera cuts to the same young man waking up as a bugler plays the ‘reveille.’ The viewer is then shown the larger group of youth as they set about helping the community and continuing to preserve the peaceful way of life from before the Occupation. The young men repeatedly appear shirtless in the scenes that follow, in which they begin work on planting a new forest. The voiceover emphasises the importance of such activities: ‘En créant [cette forêt], ils seront à l’égal de quelqu’un qui bâtit une maison, qui élève un enfant.’ These men are serving their communities, but they also appear, importantly, as physically strong, with the narrator’s explicit comparison between raising children and the activities of the *Chantiers* movement emphasising their potential for fatherhood in the future.

The next scene builds on this initial comparison between the actions of the *Chantiers* and the fatherhood that awaits them, emphasising that the traditional family is still alive and well under Pétain, and offering reassurance that French men are still prepared to provide for their families. In the Mâconnais, a group of youth from the *Chantiers* are shown assisting a group of women of varying ages with the grape harvest. Crucially, the sequence in the Mâconnais reinforces the traditional gender roles of men and women, again emphasising the physical prowess of the young men while placing the women in domestic and maternal settings,

providing a comforting image that traditional roles continue in the National Revolution. The support demonstrated for pro-family legislation at the time of the Family Code demonstrated the popularity of the traditional family amongst the majority of the population; for the Unoccupied Zone audience of the film, then, this is comforting confirmation that Pétain and his government is continuing to nurture the family. There is also a clear emphasis on the need to encourage an increase in the birth rate, with the film explicitly focusing on the *vendange* as an opportunity for finding a partner and after the hard work has been completed by the young men, the camera picks out a group of young women disappearing down the hillside with some of these same young men in tow, albeit with some older women as chaperones. In the previous shots, the same young women are shown preparing food for the men, looking after the children of some of the older women, and helping to wait on local dignitaries, including the government's own representative, who, the narrator confides, 'a pu constater à la fois l'ardeur des vendangeurs et la qualité des raisins.' This is in contrast to the hard physical labour of the *Chantiers* youth, who are, with the exception of their final parting stroll with their female companions, consistently shown to be in positions of strength, demonstrating their dexterity in the fields. The emphasis on physical prowess and male virility is further reinforced in the reports from Vichy, in which the *Chantiers* youth are shown parading around the football stadium, demonstrating the continuity of French military strength set out in *Dakar*, *Fidélité* and in *Méditerranée/Niger*. In Vichy, these young men appear on parade, but are nevertheless content and relaxed, presenting a consensual, and apparently inclusive, image of Vichy's youth movements in contrast to the exclusionary legislation introduced in other domains under the auspices of the National Revolution, including anti-Semitic measures, and indeed with regards to the family, especially draconian anti-abortion laws.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, in Lodève, the local *Chantiers* youth march up a mountain in freezing conditions. These signs of the importance of French physical accomplishment are

¹⁰⁴ See Robert O. Paxton, p.166

accompanied by shots of the *tricolore*, run up the flagpole at Vichy and floating in the breeze in Lodève, suggesting that these men represent a positive future for France under Pétain.

In the section of the film on Vaucluse, by contrast, the film demonstrates the domestic importance of such hard labour. The *Chantiers* youth are shown to be contributing to the local community by working the land, in an explicit promotion of the ‘Retour à la terre’ policies enacted under the National Revolution.¹⁰⁵ In this scene, the camera picks out a group of youth from the *Chantiers* walking along a field with a horse and cart to ‘donner un coup de main aux paysans’ in a reassuring scene of continuity of traditional rural values. The images of young men working the land in a location devoid of any reference to the German occupiers suggests that life does continue as normal under Vichy. The next shot develops the comforting sense of the normal rhythms of life; the same *Chantiers* youth are harvesting the fields by hand, bringing in fruit and vegetables to serve the local population. The film constructs a clear link between the efforts of the young men and family values and having harvested the fruit, two of the *Chantiers* youth are shown sharing their produce with a large family, thus drawing together Vichy’s values of *travail* and *famille*. In this scene, as in the Mâconnais, women are shown in a domestic role, for example the family grandmother serves the meal while her husband, possibly the farmer, pours the wine to thank these young men for their help. There is again a visible contrast between the hard physical labours of the *Chantiers* youth, with their toiling in the fields, and the domestic setting of the women in the film who are not, in fact, shown carrying out any form of labour during the course of the entire documentary. The suggestion in the film is that the young men of the *Chantiers*, not women, should support the farmers. The two jarring references to the realities of the hardships suffered by families under the Occupation come in this and the subsequent scene, which hint at the absence of around 1.5 million Prisoners of War.¹⁰⁶ In this first instance, in the Vaucluse, the narrator explains, the presence of the *Chantiers* youth on the farm is

¹⁰⁵ Robert O. Paxton, p.208

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.18

required in order to fill the gap left by the absent prisoners. The portrayal of women in the film, then, while appearing to be more consensual than the racial aspects to the National Revolution, in particular anti-Semitism, nevertheless supports Miranda Pollard's argument of women's 'mobilisation' at the same time as their exclusion from life under Vichy. Indeed, as Pollard has argued, while these films do not appear especially exclusive in comparison with the agenda of racial discrimination around anti-Semitism, the role of the family still placed women in an essentially *excluded* position, in which, in Pollard's words, 'their voices [are] not heard' and 'women had to be mobilized but not given power.'¹⁰⁷

The final scene of the film confirms the importance of the hard work conducted by these young men in the family context. In Périgeux, there is a shortage of local milkmen, so some young men from the *Chantiers*, working with the youth section of the local cycling club, are shown to be helping with the distribution of milk and other produce. As in the Vaucluse section, there is a further reference to the absence of prisoners, obliging the *Chantiers* youth to step in to help the local community. Like their colleagues in Provence, the *Chantiers* youth throw themselves into the task with the same vigour as those men shown planting a new forest, or the Mâconnais *vendangeurs* or the troop on parade at Vichy. The dedication of these men is shown by the emphasis on the time of their awakening, at 5.00am, when they then proceed to bathe in a nearby river, before receiving their itineraries for the day from a more senior *Chantier* organiser. The camera then follows one of the young men as he arrives at a local farm to collect produce for distribution. The narrator insists that these actions are prompted by a clear aim of 'ravitailler les malades et les vieillards.' Much like the farmers in the Vaucluse, these young men are thus helping their elders through providing them with produce, again emphasising that the traditional family is being protected by the Vichy authorities. The cycling proficiency of these men is another manifestation of the physical prowess of young French men, serving the French family in several forms, from the elderly beneficiaries of their milkrounds, to the local families in the Vaucluse and in the Mâconnais

¹⁰⁷ Miranda Pollard, p.70

who benefit from their harvesting of produce and grapes respectively, and even the local population in Hyères who will gain firewood from the newly-planted forest. Such is the success of the milk cyclists that they have, the narrator asserts, travelled over the equivalent of one and a quarter of the earth's surface in their one year of service. As the last member of the *Chantiers* arrives at a children's hospital to deliver his milk, the narrator proudly acclaims this 'réussite de la jeunesse.'

The audible pride in the narrator's voice in this final sequence highlights the sense of national pride prevalent throughout *Jeunes de France*. The film's triumphant championing of the work of the *Chantiers* movement does much to promote the dual values of the National Revolution of *travail* and *famille*. Through demonstrating the actions of the *Chantiers* movement in a number of different settings across the Unoccupied Zone, the film clearly conveys the importance of hard work for the benefit of the French family, in a literal sense as in the Vaucluse and the Mâconnais, and in a grander sense in the Périgord, in Hyères and in Vichy, where members of the *Chantiers* movement on parade are shown to be contributing to French national standing. The function of the narrator is particularly important in this regard, highlighting the scale of the task achieved by the *Chantiers* movement, as in the 'quality' of the grape harvest in the Mâconnais and in the distance covered by the young milkmen of the Périgord, and drawing on words denoting achievement throughout ('réussite,' 'qualité'), while scenes of hard labour are accompanied by military music played on trumpets.

Jeunes de France, like its 1941 contemporaries, *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger*, offers a comforting vision of life under Vichy to the Unoccupied Zone audience, with its focus on the continued importance of family values. Its composition of several reports from different locations gives the appearance that the geographical borders of the Vichy regime are far bigger than the reality, drawing on a diversity of settings, including the rural (Mâconnais), the semi-urban (Vichy) and the coast (Hyères). The emphasis on the continued protection of the traditional family unit under Pétain, through the domestic sequences, including after the

vendange and the harvest in the Vaucluse, is complemented by the continual references to physically strong young male Frenchmen, demonstrating that the future of France is also secure. The parade scene in Vichy highlights the militaristic aspect of the *Chantiers* movement, albeit in a manner which presents these young men more as *camarades* than as a well-drilled military unit. This scene lacks the same emphasis on military strength as either *Fidélité* or *Méditerranée/Niger*, with its consistent focus on the physical development of the young. Nevertheless, the scene offers comfort to the audience that there is also a future for the French army. The harvesting sequences in the Mâconnais and the Vaucluse, alongside the images of the men distributing milk in the Périgord, also emphasise the continuity of traditional French rural ways; the fruits of the land continue to be exploited under Pétain just as they were before the Occupation. The absence of any references to the Germans certainly aids this impression, suggesting that there are no checks on the harnessing of material resources under Vichy. While it is certainly true that rural populations benefited from the ready supply of food, the realities for more urban viewers were altogether different and the harsh winters of 1940 and 1941 meant that in some areas there was simply not enough food even to make up the meagre rationing allowances.¹⁰⁸ In this sense, the film offers a fantastical image of France under Vichy for urban audiences, a tempting glimpse of the luxuries of the pre-Occupation years. The coherent theme which runs through each of the amalgamated reports is that Pétain and his government are protecting the family and seeking to feed the nation, but this can only be achieved thanks to the physical prowess of the French youth, which in turn is being nurtured by the regime. The film on the one hand appears to aim to reassure the audience through asserting that the traditional rural ways of life are continuing, and on the other strives for an aspirational image for young viewers, that they can, and should, follow in the example of the *Chantiers* movement to protect the future of the nation.

¹⁰⁸ See Eric Alary et al, p.160

At a time when other propaganda was taking an exclusionary approach, *Jeunes de France* does not appear to exclude any viewer from this comforting image of a strong, vibrant and productive France. While women appear in domestic settings, they are not excluded from this vision of France. Unlike in either *Fidélité* or *Méditerranée/Niger*, which dealt with the Empire, the concept of French superiority does not appear in the film and racial, or cultural, differences are not mentioned. Instead, Este's film offers an image of a country with no social divisions except for traditional gender divides, which were greatly supported before the Occupation in any case. Again, this reflects Pollard's assessment that Vichy viewed the need to control women's desires for emancipation by enforcing 'activities that allowed no blurring of sexual difference, that rested on naturally inscribed male and female opposition.'¹⁰⁹ This is also a France in which the family is protected and nurtured by the actions of the official government youth organisation, which encouraged the young to look after their elders. The report on the parade of the *Chantiers* movement in Vichy even contains a brief shot of Pétain bestowing the *Légion d'honneur* on the Général de la Porte du Theil, the founder of the *Chantiers*, adding to the references to the Marshal in *Dakar*, *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger*. The suggestion in *Jeunes de France* is that Pétain is encouraging and nurturing this vision of France and it is thanks to him, and his government, that traditional ways continue.

Comfort in the chef: Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry

Este's emphasis on a comforting and reassuring vision of life under Vichy in *Jeunes de France* reflected the techniques of the Empire-related documentaries of 1940 and 1941 and this was an approach which Este repeated in his further two films, *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* and the 1942 film *Un an de la Révolution nationale*. Este's work on *FAPG* had clearly extended his opportunities way beyond the confines of the newsreel. Having been commissioned to make *Jeunes de France*, Este was also offered the chance to transform *FAPG*'s report on Pétain's 1st May 1941 visit to Commentry and Montluçon into a

¹⁰⁹ Miranda Pollard, p.70

stand-alone documentary film. As with *Jeunes de France*, the content of the documentary, and its overall tone, is one of comforting reassurance. Not only does the film present the apparent political independence and strength of France under Pétain, but it also emphasises that traditions of French industry are being protected as part of the regime's commitment to the importance of work.

While focussing on the Marshal's visit to these two communes in the Allier, the documentary also includes footage of Pétain giving his speech to commemorate the inaugural Fête du Travail under Vichy in Commentry. Whereas the film as a whole stresses the continuity of French traditions and of French national strength, the speech is more notable for Pétain's emphasis on the different approach to the 1st May under his government, emphasising that the day would henceforth be 'un symbole d'union et d'amitié parce qu'il sera la fête du travail et des travailleurs,' ahead of the 'symbole de division et de haine' it had previously represented.¹¹⁰ Far from emphasising continuity, the opening line of the Marshal's discourse in fact underlined the distinctions between Vichy and the Republic. Yet while radio audiences, who heard the speech broadcast in full on Radio-Vichy in the evening of the 1st of May, heard the insistence on the *new* focus for the Fête du Travail under the regime, they did not witness the signs of comforting continuity which played out on the filmed version of the visit until later. The initial newsreel reports formed part of the 6th May newsreel¹¹¹ and the documentary was released on the 14th of May, some two weeks after the initial radio broadcast of Pétain's speech.

Montluçon does not feature in the film, apart from a brief glimpse at the end of the film of Pétain touring the town and instead, the emphasis is on Commentry, the site of the Marshal's speech. The film opens with a sequence in which Pétain is shown meeting workers and *anciens combattants* in the square in Commentry, outside a factory building. The male

¹¹⁰ Pétain's 1st May 1941 speech is reproduced in full in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, pp.127-131

¹¹¹ 'A Vichy, Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry, traverse la ville en voiture et à pied,' *FAPG*, 06/05/1941, 4119GJV[Gaumont Journal de Vichy]00006

narrator, M. Jacques Breteuil, who voiced *FAPG*¹¹² and who later became the Chef de reportage for *France-Actualités*,¹¹³ announces that ‘à Commentry, au milieu des usines qui empruntent le centre de l’industrie française, le Maréchal Pétain parle aux Français de tous les cas.’ Pétain makes his way slowly around the square, shaking the hands of the gathered crowd. The reception for the Marshal suggests that business continues as usual in France, beyond the pomp of this official visit and amongst the well-wishers are a group of miners who appear with grimy faces and their lamps, representing the traditions of French physical and engineering prowess. The presence of the miners suggests that France continues to provide for itself and the French continue to work hard for their nation. This imagery of ongoing physical strength in the form of the miners is in harmony with the actions of Pétain and his government in protecting this way of life; one of the miners is even shown presenting a bouquet of flowers to thank the Marshal for ensuring that they are still employed. Despite this symbolic gesture of collective gratitude to Pétain for his efforts, however, the Marshal fails to hide his discomfort at receiving flowers from a barrel-chested, coal-encrusted miner, which rather undermines Este’s effort to render explicit Pétain’s role in encouraging work. The subsequent scenes, though, restore order, developing a clear link between the persona of the Marshal and the continuity of hard work under Vichy, drawing largely on Pétain’s speech. The gathered crowd is shown sheltering under umbrellas for protection from the rain, portraying the high regard in which the Marshal is held by people from all walks of life and even from obscure villages in *la France profonde*. That these people have left their workplaces to come to hear from Pétain on a rainy May day also emphasises the gratitude that the Unoccupied Zone audience should feel towards the government, which has ensured that such scenes of apparently normal village life continue.

The crowd greets nearly every line of Pétain’s speech with cheers, starting with his initial statement about the ‘new’ direction of the 1st of May under his government. The camera then

¹¹² See ‘Note concernant “FAPG”,’ 16/05/1941, AN F42 118

¹¹³ See ‘Liste des personnes de la Société appelées à travailler en zone occupée,’ 18/05/1942, AN F42 119

cuts repeatedly between the Marshal, the appreciative crowd and scenes of work conducted in a variety of settings, drawing on the same technique as *Jeunes de France* by emphasising that the rhythm of work continues around the country, from the smithy to the factory floor. Each line of the speech is accompanied by an image of the crowd or of a workplace and as Pétain states that workers ‘sont protégés contre les alliés du dommage,’ the camera cuts to a mine, where men stand still, apparently listening to Pétain’s radio broadcast, their pickaxes scattered around them. The line of the speech emphasises that the Marshal and his government are protecting and nourishing workers in the same way as they have supported the family. The images of the miners reinforce this message, while the next line of the speech, in which Pétain states that workers ‘trouveront dans leur métier une sorte de sécurité,’ is accompanied by images of blacksmiths hard at work, again showing that hard work continues thanks to the intervention of the government. There is one, fleeting shot of a group of secretaries of both genders, standing around their employer’s desk to listen to the speech, which, despite the unusual placement of women in a non-domestic setting for a Vichy documentary, again aligns Pétain’s personality with comforting scenes of apparently normal office life. The women are not, crucially, carrying out any form of manual labour, but appear in a secretarial setting, and are evidently assisting their male employer. The same male employer nods along approvingly to Pétain’s comment that: ‘patrons, techniciens et ouvriers dans l’industrie et l’artisanat, formez-vous des équipes et jouerons ensemble pour gagner ensemble.’ The suggestion in this line, of France pulling together and continuing to work hard under Vichy, is greeted with cheers and applause for Pétain, and shouts of ‘Vive le Maréchal.’

The conclusion of the speech, in which Pétain stresses the need to ‘re-discover’ the ‘balance’ of the country as ‘un pays qui travaille, comme tous les autres, retrouvera l’équilibre,’ is also warmly applauded by the crowd. The suggestion here, as in the previous line, however, is that France *will* re-build herself. The Marshal’s use of the future tense in the speech, broadcast on Radio-Vichy, seems to imply that this reconstruction and return to work has not

yet taken place, but the images which accompany the speech in Este's documentary tell a different story, and suggest that France is already back at work. Radio audiences listening to the final lines of the speech would have been in no doubt that Pétain intended to promote work, but they would not have seen the variety of settings in which work was continuing as normal under Vichy that Este so carefully puts together. The final confirmation of French ways of life continuing as before the Occupation comes in the last sequence of the film following Pétain's conclusion, for as the Marshal stops speaking, a band strikes up the *Marseillaise* and a police unit pulls out a *tricolore*. The images of the crowd then fade out to the sound of the national anthem. The image of the *tricolore* and the sight of the band playing the *Marseillaise* were aspects to Pétain's visit to Commentry to which radio audiences were not party. Este's film again differs from the suggestion in Pétain's opening and concluding line that Vichy *will* respectively re-claim the 1st May as a commemoration of hard work rather than a celebration and *will* protect the tradition of work. Instead, the scenes of the crowd standing respectfully as the national anthem is played, and the policemen raising the *tricolore* cement the overall message to Este's film; France is already back to normal. The images that appear in the documentary suggest that France is hard at work, thanks to the intervention of the Marshal. The use of both *tricolore* and *Marseillaise* also suggests that the version of life portrayed in Commentry has national implications and the suggestion is that this is the model of daily life for the whole of the country, not just for this small corner of the Allier. That the crowd is able to listen to the national anthem and to wave the flag thus implies that French traditions are protected under Vichy, while also linking Pétain to the French nation as a whole.

In the same way as Este ignored potentially divisive themes in *Jeunes de France*, though, the images of French traditions and hard work continuing under Vichy which appear in *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* are devoid of any suggestion that this vision of work is restricted to the Unoccupied Zone. As a propaganda film, such oversights are not necessarily surprising, but are important to explore further in order to cast light on Este's

motivations in making these two documentaries. The significant obstacles to achieving the film's scenes of hard work in 1941 are overlooked, for example the Demarcation Line and the absence from the world of work of Prisoners of War are not mentioned in Este's appraisal of Vichy's commitment to the value of work, nor indeed in Pétain's speech. The existence of the German occupiers is also altogether ignored in the film, an omission which enables Este to imply that France is working in a self-sufficient way as it has done in the past. The requisitioning of French material resources by the occupiers¹¹⁴ is overlooked in order to emphasise the Marshal's success in ensuring that work continues under Vichy. In the same way, the commemoration of the grand state occasion of Pétain's visit to two comparatively obscure communes, including the cheering crowds which greet the Marshal in both locations, reflects the same technique employed in *Jeunes de France* through offering an exaggerated and overly-optimistic indication of Pétain's autonomy. The presence of the *tricolore* and *Marseillaise*, with their explicitly *national* connotations, also develops the sense that Pétain has enabled the whole country to share in this vision and to return to normal routines of life. In short, while Este's film offers a comforting image of the continuities of work and traditions under Vichy, which is at odds with some of the suggestions in Pétain's radio broadcast, namely that the return to work is still to be achieved, the version of life portrayed in *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* is as illusory as that of *Jeunes de France*. Although the Unoccupied Zone audience might well have been encouraged to see that France was still capable of producing all that she needed, the message of the documentary film is, in fact, less of an accurate portrayal of the reality of the National Revolution than Pétain's radio broadcast which at least acknowledges that there is work still to be achieved.

Este's films, with their oversight of material restrictions and of the realities of the German occupation, are, then, moderate portrayals of daily life in France under Vichy. Clearly Este chose these reports carefully from the newsreel, offering a variety of case studies for the

¹¹⁴ See for example Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life under the Occupation* (London: Penguin, 2007) pp.228-229

audience to demonstrate the varied geographical settings in which the Marshal's government was enabling traditional customs to continue. Este's choice of reports also suggests a deliberate attempt to encourage the Unoccupied Zone audience, many of whom were facing material difficulties, to take comfort in the maintenance of values which had been popular before the war, especially the family (emphasised in both films) and in the continued rhythm of daily life. Este was uniquely placed amongst his fellow filmmakers and as Président (director) of the *FAPG* newsreel, he was an experienced film professional with access to the necessary materials to make *Jeunes de France* and *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*. Yet Este also appears to have felt that he had more autonomy in documentary film than in newsreel production. By the latter part of 1941, *FAPG* had begun to include reports on collaboration and the German war effort alongside more moderate portrayals of daily life, yet the Germans are entirely absent in both *Jeunes de France* and *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*. Perhaps Este viewed documentaries as an altogether different genre, sufficiently different to allow him to ignore inconvenient realities altogether. As a film professional, he was probably aware that, in Eric Alary's terms, 'le public [avait] besoin d'oublier'¹¹⁵ and that the cinema met this need. In any case, the absence of references to collaboration or to the presence of German troops on French soil renders *Jeunes de France*, and indeed *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*, more escapist than the late 1941 editions of *FAPG*.

Este's service to Vichy over two years suggests some sympathy with the aims of the Marshal and his government, although Este did not, unlike Tixier-Vignancour for example, have an obvious political background. That he chose to include images of collaboration in his own newsreel suggests that he either lacked the conviction to oppose such measures or perhaps that the inclusion of such material would have professional and personal benefits. Indeed, that Este's career continued at Vichy through his commission for both *Jeunes de France* and *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* in 1941, and *Un an de la Révolution*

¹¹⁵ Eric Alary et al, p.249

nationale in 1942, suggests that he was held in high regard by the SGI's leadership, including Coupan. It is thus not easy to ascertain whether Este chose to offer a comforting portrayal of France under Vichy in *Jeunes de France* and in *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* for ideological or personal reasons. In any case, Este did not deviate from his inclination to overlook negative or potentially divisive themes in his later documentaries. He may well have shared the views of many French people in supporting the need to protect the family at the time of Daladier's 1939 Family Code, and might therefore have also identified with Vichy's commitment to protect the family; *Jeunes de France* certainly reflected the popularity of family mores amongst the majority of his audience. In the same way, his portrayal of the protection of French traditions, with the association between Pétain, the *tricolore*, the *Marseillaise* and the images of hard work in *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* may well have reflected Este's sympathy for France's two national symbols. As with both *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger*, though, Este's film demonstrates the SGI's willingness to engage filmmakers who were prepared to produce documentaries which did not necessarily reflect the political realities of the Vichy authorities, and, in the case of Este, to permit the director of its own newsreel to follow this technique. The arrival of Louis-Émile Galey, a fellow film professional, as the *Directeur du Service du Cinéma* in September 1941¹¹⁶ may well have allowed Este this freedom. It is clear, in any case, that the SGI's leadership placed enormous faith in Este to maintain a consistently comforting and consensual tone in his first full-length documentary film which was at odds with the producers of local radio stations such as Radio-Toulouse, and later at odds with national radio.

Vichy documentary in 1941: the consolidation of an alternative portrayal of France

Vichy documentary film in 1941 was thus broadly characterised by a sustained oversight of the harsher realities of the Occupation, ignoring the presence of the Axis powers in some parts of the Empire in both *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger*, and the restrictions on

¹¹⁶ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.22

domestic French autonomy and on Vichy's protection of work and the family in both *Jeunes de France* and *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*. Films in 1941 sought to offer a comforting version of life under Pétain to comfort the Unoccupied Zone audience, in part through denying that such a 'zone' even existed. Throughout each of these films, there is no suggestion that there are any checks on French domestic or international power. The harnessing of French national symbols also emphasises the patriotic sense that France as a nation is thriving under the Marshal and his government, while the persona of Pétain is used in each of the films in some way, whether through the inclusion of his portrait as in *Fidélité*, in his physical presence, as in *Jeunes de France* and *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*, or a reference to his actions as in *Méditerranée/Niger*.

The films also consolidated the distinction between the portrayal of life under Vichy (and thus of the National Revolution) in documentary film on the one hand and in other propaganda on the other hand. This is especially marked in the direct contrasts between the promotion of the opening of the *ligne transsaharienne* in *Méditerranée/Niger* and in the printed almanac produced to commemorate the same occasion, and between the radio broadcast of Pétain's 1st May 1941 speech and the images of France at work in *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*. Yet documentary film in 1941 also took a different approach from local radio, as in the example of the anti-Semitic programme on Radio-Toulouse, and even from *FAPG*, which began to include reports on collaboration in the latter half of the year following the signing of the Paris Protocols under Darlan.¹¹⁷ Documentaries thus conveyed a more comforting, more idealistic version of France under Pétain in 1941 than appeared in other propaganda. The directors of these films, like Coupan before them, might well have been motivated by their own professional ambition, or they might have been determined to make films which reflected the public's desire to 'forget' everyday life in the cinema and thus to maintain the cinema's potential for escapism. While the filmmakers may have shared some of Vichy's political ideals, their repeated use of the figure of Pétain

¹¹⁷ See for example the report on Pétain and Laval's meeting with Goëring: 'L'entrevue de Saint Florentin,' *FAPG*, 11/12/1941, *PJM* 1941 50 7

suggests that they shared the widely-held support for the Marshal himself. The emphasis on the family and on the strength of the French nation at home and abroad, as developed in the use of French national symbols and in the portrayal of the loyalty and exploitation of the Empire, were all themes which were supported by a significant majority of the French population. Unlike the producers of Radio-Toulouse, for example, who promoted anti-Semitism, which lacked the popular hold of the Empire, the family and French patriotic sentiment before Vichy, Naintré, Este and the unknown director of *Méditerranée/Niger* were, above all, simply reflecting ideals shared by their audiences.

iii. Reassurance in the values of the National Revolution in 1942: *Le Jardin sans fleurs, Travail and Nourrir la France*

In 1940 and 1941, Vichy documentary makers had drawn on three central themes to offer some form of comfort to their Unoccupied Zone audiences: the maintenance and loyalty of the Empire; the continuity of national pride in Pétain's visit to Montluçon and Commentry; and the reinstatement of the physical and moral prowess of the French youth, through the protection of the family, under Vichy in *Jeunes de France*. Whereas the upheaval and relief of 1940 had been replaced in 1941 by a sense of 'attentisme', with some signs of 'préoccupation' amongst the French, 1942 saw a further slump in public support for the regime, in light of increased anti-Semitism and the return of Laval in April 1942. The *synthèse* of the Prefect reports from June 1942 recorded that 'l'accueil de la population avait été, disaient les Préfets dans leur rapport du mois d'avril, méfiant et craintif' and that 'certains préfets signalent un accroissement de la nervosité de l'opinion devant la longueur des hostilités, les difficultés sans cesse grandissantes de la vie quotidienne et l'incertitude de l'avenir.'¹¹⁸ The *Rafle du Vel d'hiv*, in which 12, 884 Jewish men, women and children were

¹¹⁸ 'Synthèse des rapports des Préfets de la zone non-occupée pour le mois de mai 1942,' 15/06/1942, IHTP

rounded up and deported,¹¹⁹ was a visible signal of Vichy's service to the Nazis and translated anti-Semitic policies and ideals into acts. Laborie records that in the aftermath of the *Rafle*, 'la population est choquée, souvent bouleversée.'¹²⁰ While the *Rafle* prompted some opposition from the population, it coincided with further rationing and by the end of 1942 adult rations were reduced to just 275 grams of bread and 21.9 grams of meat per day, amongst equally meagre allowances of dairy products.¹²¹ November 1942 saw the entire country occupied by the Nazis and the scuttling of the French fleet¹²² which had been shown to be a source of continued French strength in the port of Mers-el-Kébir in *Fidélité*. This occupation added to the sense of 'l'anxiété, le pessimisme' of the French in 1942, 'exacerbés par les difficultés d'approvisionnement.'¹²³ The Empire was a decreasingly viable subject for documentaries and Operation Torch, which preceded the occupation of the entire country by the Nazis, had deprived France of Algeria and Morocco, while the Germans occupied Tunisia following the Italians' failure to secure the country, prompting some eventual French resistance.¹²⁴ Even before November, the Japanese presence in Indochina was strengthened throughout 1942, culminating in the seizure of the entire French merchant navy in July 1942¹²⁵ and the British had added Madagascar to the former French territories under their control in June, having occupied Syria midway through the previous year.¹²⁶ Sources of comfort and continuity in 1942 were thus scarce: collaboration was at an all-time high; exclusionary measures had increased significantly, not least in the form of the *Rafles*; and Laval introduced the voluntary *Relève* scheme in June 1942.¹²⁷ Vichy documentary makers thus had to strive to find new ground to offer some form of comfort in their films.

¹¹⁹ On the *Rafle du Vel d'hiv*, see for example Claude Lévy and Paul Tillard, *La Grande Rafle du Vel d'hiv*, *op cit*.

¹²⁰ Pierre Laborie, p.279

¹²¹ See Eric Alary et al, p.207

¹²² Robert O. Paxton, p.281

¹²³ Pierre Laborie, p.281

¹²⁴ See for example Robert O. Paxton, pp.282-283

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p.313

¹²⁶ On British actions in Syria, see for example Colin Smith, pp.219-243; on Madagascar, pp.293-306

¹²⁷ See for example Robert O. Paxton, pp.281-282; H.R. Kedward, 'STO et macquis,' in Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Eds.), *La France des années noires 2. De l'Occupation à la Libération* (Paris: Seuil, 2000) p.310

Where the films of 1940 and 1941 had dealt above all with the idea of a continually strong Empire, and a continued protection of the French colonial model, thus *la patrie*, with the Vichy ideals of *travail* and *famille* covered less extensively in *Jeunes de France*, in 1942 the filmmakers fell back on each of these values when producing their documentaries. Thus the family was used by the former marketing specialist Louis Merlin in *Le Jardin sans fleurs* as a means by which to comfort the French audience; for Jean Morel, who had so dramatically given voice to *Fidélité*, work was exploited for its potential for comfort and security in his film *Travail*, in the same way as Jean Masson, director of *Nourrir la France* saw comfort in the familiar setting of rural French traditions. Each of these directors chose to focus on subjects away from the realities of the Occupation and the Vichy regime, choosing instead to provide comfort for their viewers. In the same year that Radio-Vichy introduced a weekly anti-Semitic radio programme under Darquier de Pellepoix's leadership of the CGQJ,¹²⁸ and local publications began to promote the same anti-Semitic ideals,¹²⁹ Vichy documentary makers ignored such divisive topics, emphasising continuity. In short, while these filmmakers focussed increasingly on the domestic context rather than the Empire, their approach had not changed, despite the return of Laval in April 1942 and the changing realities of Vichy policy. In 1942, cinema still offered an opportunity for audiences to experience films based on familiar, comforting themes, and directors were still prepared, and permitted, to meet this demand.

Finding comfort in the family: promoting natalist ideals in Le Jardin sans fleurs

The family was a theme with which all cinema-goers could identify. Certainly, the emphasis on the Empire in 1941 had sought to demonstrate comforting continuity and the Empire was a constant source of pride for the French, but the family was far closer to home for audiences in the Unoccupied Zone. With up to 1.9 million Prisoners of War absent from their homes,

¹²⁸ See Memorandum from Darquier de Pellepoix, 10/10/1942, CDJC, LXXIII-22/CCXXXVIII-190

¹²⁹ See for example the *Bulletin hebdomadaire d'information du comité départemental de la propagande sociale du Maréchal dans le Lot*, which claimed in October 1942 that 'La question juive est incontestablement celle qui préoccupe au plus haut point les Français de la zone libre.' CDJC X10-27

and as many as 1 million still in captivity in 1944,¹³⁰ a significant proportion of French families in both zones had been badly affected and indeed divided by the defeat. For audience members watching Vichy documentary films, an emphasis on the strong family unit was a reminder of life before the Occupation. For the Vichy leadership, the family was also a theme which was readily drawn upon. Pétain had claimed that the defeat was caused by ‘trop peu d’enfants,’ leading to an emphasis on natalist ideals as part of the promotion of the traditional family unit. Indeed, Pétain and his cabinet colleagues viewed the family as an ‘organic’ social unit and it was not an abstract ideal like liberty or equality.¹³¹ For Louis Merlin, the maker of *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, the comforting capacity of the family could be combined with Vichy’s own natalist agenda.

Yet like earlier documentaries, *Le Jardin sans fleurs* also ignored uncomfortable and inconvenient realities, especially the draconian measures which were aimed at increasing the birthrate, instead championing a traditional model of the family, with traditional gender roles, which ignored draconian measures against abortion and divorce. Indeed, the portrayal of women in the film echoes Pollard’s assessment of the way in which Vichy’s Commissariat général à la famille promoted women as mothers in order to ensure that ‘female sexuality had to be more conspicuously disciplined through celebration and assertion [...] It was a discursive strategy aimed at women that could readily be internalized.’¹³² Unlike the apparently consensual image of mothers displayed in *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, the reality was in fact rather different and under the auspices of the National Revolution, a great deal of legislation was introduced, which for example made divorce illegal within the first three years of marriage and only permissible in special circumstances thereafter and outlawed abortion, while fathers of large families enjoyed special privileges in the workplace.¹³³ Mothers, on the other hand, saw few immediate benefits, but were granted

¹³⁰ See Yves Durand, ‘Les prisonniers,’ in Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Eds.), *La France des années noires I*, op. cit., p.261

¹³¹ Robert O. Paxton, p.166

¹³² Miranda Pollard, p.56

¹³³ *Ibid*

priority access to some public services—which was no doubt of greater help to their families than themselves.¹³⁴ The role of women was exclusively that of motherhood. Despite a glorification of motherhood through the reinstitution of the *Fête des mères*, women received little personal glory. Indeed, Robert Gildea records one striking example of how Vichy viewed women, in which a father from Nantes, who had just conceived his fifteenth child, was given a cheque and a signed portrait of the Marshal. The long-suffering mother, however, received nothing.¹³⁵

The idea of women as maternal figures who appear in domestic settings was, while highly traditional, not the exclusive preserve of an extreme-right regime. Indeed, some contemporary British documentaries focussed on very similar topics, and portrayed women in broadly similar ways, as was the case in *They Also Serve*,¹³⁶ a contemporary British film which, through its depiction of one mother's daily routine, demonstrated the support offered by housewives to the British war effort, especially in cooking and cleaning. Merlin chose to focus exclusively on the positive aspects of a traditional family in his documentary, eschewing anti-abortion and anti-divorce measures which, like the harsher realities of the Empire ignored in 1940 and 1941 films, might have proved potentially divisive. Unlike any of the documentaries discussed elsewhere in the chapter, *Le Jardin sans fleurs* takes a semi-fictional approach, which allows Merlin to emphasise the strength of strong nuclear families using character actors. While consistently consensual and comforting, this approach also has some flaws for a modern-day audience; the actors are not convincing as happy family members, and there are some inconvenient moments in which poor staging seems to suggest that a strong, happy family is rather more fictitious than the film appears to claim. Yet to an audience faced with the material hardships of the Occupation, the divisions of existing family units and an ever-hardening collaborationist agenda on the part of the Vichy

¹³⁴ James G. Shields, p.19

¹³⁵ Robert Gildea, p.79

¹³⁶ *They Also Serve* (Dir : HG Halsted, 1942) IWM UKY 236

authorities, the film contains some comforting images which emphasise the importance of the family to Pétain, as *père* of the French family.

The principal motif around which the film develops is the image of a once-flourishing garden (France) which has now fallen into disrepair and has ceased flowering because of the absence of pollination, which acts as a metaphor for reproduction. Interestingly, Merlin utilises both a male and a female narrator to voice different sections of the film, so the female narrator is softly-spoken and maternal, providing the voiceover for the opening of the film and for some of the fictional sections, whereas the male commentator is harsher and more matter-of-fact. The ‘father’ narrator almost berates the audience for its lack of recent reproduction and presents a series of statistics on the birth-rate to support his fatherly scolding.

The film opens with a shot of an empty, apparently-abandoned and barren garden. The maternal narrator tells the audience that she had ‘un rêve affreux’ in which there were ‘plus de fleurs dans nos jardins [...] plus d’enfants dans les berceaux.’ As the female narrator’s voice fades out, the camera pans out to reveal that this is not simply the story of one garden, but all of the gardens in the village. The fatherly voice of the male narrator informs the audience that ‘ce village n’est pas devenu désert parce que les hommes sont prisonniers, mais parce qu’aucun enfant n’y est né.’ The impact of the low birth rate on *la France profonde* is therefore established from the very opening of the film. A series of dramatic shots follow, which serve to reinforce the image of damage caused by France’s collective failure to reproduce. Firstly the film shows a close-up of an ivy-clad house in the village. The male narrator states that ‘lorsque le dernier vieillard mourut, le village a cessé d’exister.’ Secondly, we see an empty cot eerily rocking by itself. We are informed that the village was not destroyed by the war, but by the poor birth rate: ‘Ce n’est pas la guerre qui l’a détruite, mais la dénatalité.’

The film then shifts to a fictional French classroom. The boys in the class are lectured by their fictitious teacher on the declining birth rate. This scene transforms into a graphic of several babies of varying sizes to represent the birth rate of several Western European countries. The largest baby is that of Nazi Germany, clutching a Swastika in its hand. The French baby, by contrast, is the smallest. This is followed by a brief shot of a content, traditional family looking remarkably happy with their lot, thus ignoring the material hardships of the Occupation, and especially severe rationing.

This happy family is replaced by a series of interviews with apparently ordinary French people, who deliver their lines in a polished manner. Each individual makes the same point, namely the more children in a country, the happier its citizens. One elderly lady is at pains to emphasise that wealth should be measured in terms of children, affirming a rather well-rehearsed line that ‘nous nous croyions riches avant la guerre parce que notre monnaie était [cachée] dans la Banque de France. Ce n’est pas vrai. Nous étions pauvres parce que d’année en année il y avait moins de naissances.’ Taking up this theme, over a shot of a smiling baby in a cot, the male narrator goes on to comment that ‘la richesse d’un pays, ce n’est pas son or, ce sont ses enfants.’ There is thus a clear dichotomy in the film between the happy, traditional family and on the other hand the view of the older generation that their country has become poorer through its failure to grow in population terms. The comforting image of the happy family, a sign of a time before the Occupation and family divisions, is disrupted briefly by this intervention, prompting the audience to seek further comfort later in the film, which Merlin duly delivers, albeit after further reinforcement of the need to increase the birth-rate, and some poor acting in the next sequence which undermines this message but offers, perhaps inadvertently, some light relief.

In the sequence, two actors playing apparently proud parents look uncomfortable when playing with their ‘child,’ to such an extent that this displeasure seems to go beyond any sentiment felt that the boy is, as the narrator informs us, an only child who as ‘le fils unique grandit sans joie.’ The boy then delivers the best line of the film, asking his ‘mother’ ‘dis

maman, avec qui je vais jouer?'. Surrounded by books and toys, the child does not appear too concerned with his predicament. The unease of the two 'parents' is compounded by another couple who are alleged to be unhappy with their one dog and no children. The dog, unfortunately, ignores the apparent sadness of the situation and jumps around repeatedly while the narrator states that 'le ménage sans enfants vit sans âmes.' The message is clear, even if the delivery is faltering, namely that to restore the strong, comforting, traditional family unit shown earlier in the film requires a substantial increase in the birthrate and thus encourages the audience to reproduce.

In the following sequence, further evidence is offered of what could happen should the nation collectively fail to reproduce. A shot of a *boulangier* baking bread is accompanied by the male narrator informing the audience that:

'Il ne suffit pas que le boulanger et la boulangère aient deux enfants [...] car il suffit d'un accident, d'une épidémie, une guerre—et celle de 14-18 nous a coûté 1.500.000 hommes—pour que la population tombe de 4 à 2.'

At this stage, a cartoon family is destroyed on screen, with both parents and one child dying. This alarming message is reinforced later in the film, with a shot of three children playing. The narrator states that 'il ne suffit que d'avoir trois enfants pour le simple survivre de notre pays.' This is essentially a warning to the audience, reproduce or face extinction. The documentary is prescriptive on exactly how many children would be appropriate and in the next shot the same three children enter another room where a fourth child lies in a cot. The voiceover emphasises the need for big families, not just for the survival of the family unit, but for the survival of the French nation and 'c'est à partir de quatre enfants que notre pays a un riche avenir.' The film again offers the comforting image of a big happy family unit as a means with which to persuade the audience to reproduce, while also distracting from the material and political realities of the Occupation and Vichy rule. However, while there is no mention of anti-abortion or anti-divorce legislation, the film nevertheless makes Vichy's

own role in nurturing the French family especially explicit, emphasising that, as with the Empire, the Marshal and his government will ensure the survival of the French family, provided that the audience is willing to help. The *État français*, the narrator proudly intones, has helped to '[rendre] à la mère sa place: la première.' A Vichy civil servant is duly pictured distributing the *allocations familiales* to a harassed father. That it is the father, and not the mother, who receives the cash in this scene reflects Pollard's assessment that Vichy's familial legislation was deliberately anti-feminist, placing the woman firmly in the role of mother while celebrating the role of men in creating their families.¹³⁷ The next shot of the film cuts to flowers growing again in the previously abandoned village, heralding a return of the comforting maternal narrator. 'Toutes les fleurs de chez nous, toutes les fleurs des beaux jardins de France s'épanouissaient,' the female voiceover adds in her dreamy voice. The film thus returns in this penultimate sequence to comforting imagery of a garden, and thus the nation, resplendent with flowers, while also offering some financial security to families in the form of *allocations*.

Finally, in something of an unsubtle conclusion to the film, a grandmother sits with her grand-daughter and recites a series of key terms, including 'foyer, devoir, maternité.' The female narrator describes these words as 'ces mots simples de nos aînés, les mots simples que nous avons oubliés.' In the final shot of the film, a portrait of Pétain is accompanied by a summary from the male narrator who repeats a line from the Marshal's text, *La politique sociale de l'avenir* namely 'dans l'ordre nouveau que nous instituons, la famille sera honorée, protégée, aidée.'¹³⁸ As with *Fidélité* and *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et Commentry*, Merlin uses an extract from Pétain's speeches to accompany scenes of a comforting nature, drawing parallels between the acts of the Marshal and the images of continuity of strong traditional families, a subject with which the audience could readily identify. This concluding sequence emphasises again the importance of the family to the

¹³⁷ Miranda Pollard, p.41

¹³⁸ Philippe Pétain, 'La politique sociale de l'avenir,' in *La Revue des deux mondes*, 15th September 1940

Vichy authorities and again emphasises the regime's commitment to protecting and nurturing the family, as a comforting and reassuring theme.

Merlin's film is not without its flaws, for example some of the acting is appalling and the metaphor of the garden is laboured at times, especially in the concluding scenes. Yet the film clearly strives for a reassuring tone and its message is very explicit, namely the Vichy authorities will protect the family, but the audience must also play its role to increase the birth rate and thus maintain the strong traditional family unit. This is a point touched upon in Steve Wharton's brief analysis of the film, which focuses above all on the role of the mother in shaping the distinct approach to Vichy's legislation. Wharton argues that 'the sacred duty [of motherhood] is given visual manifestation as audiences see the inter-generational responsibilities and the joys of motherhood which arise from them.'¹³⁹ While there is certainly a responsibility on the part of the audience, according to the film, to increase the birth rate, the focus on this responsibility is accompanied by an otherwise comforting image of motherhood and of traditional family life which appears enhanced with the absence of any apparently divisive or exclusionary themes. Neither abortion nor divorce is mentioned, with the emphasis on encouraging procreation through consensual means such as financial incentives, as opposed to utilising severe legislation. Yet as Pollard suggests, the absence of such overtly exclusionary legislation arguably overlooks the anti-feminist nature to Vichy's familial policies and indeed Merlin's film; indeed, it was, Pollard argues, precisely the 'apolitical, consensual' nature of 'the discourse of sexual distinction' inherent in Vichy's family legislation that consolidated 'a political structure that particularly needed popular support.'¹⁴⁰ Indeed, the Swastika, pictured in the graph of the international birth rate league tables, is the sole reference to the German authorities, while none of the contemporary political issues, including collaboration and anti-Semitism, which did feature in other propaganda media, appears in the film. Merlin overlooks each of these potentially unpopular issues with some degree of skill, despite the unfortunate choice of actors, crafting a

¹³⁹ Steve Wharton, p.148

¹⁴⁰ Miranda Pollard, p.40

dichotomy between the vision of France which the audience would not want to see, one devoid of children and happy families and closer to the reality of life under the Occupation, and the one closer to a bourgeois ideal,¹⁴¹ in which happy families thrive thanks to the Marshal's intervention.

Merlin was not, then, promoting any one subject that might have proved unpopular, nor indeed the preserve of an authoritarian government. Contemporary British documentaries promoted similar themes in 1942, with the importance of a strong family unit preserving traditions while men were away serving their country, unlike in *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, where the absence of Prisoners of War in Germany is not mentioned, in keeping with Merlin's dedication to the comforting image of the family. Merlin's own trajectory can arguably explain his calculated ignorance of overtly divisive and potentially unpopular topics. Merlin was a former marketing professional, not a politician, nor indeed explicitly Pétainist or collaborationist. *Le Jardin sans fleurs* reflects Merlin's background in the film's use of actors and the motif of the garden, along with the dichotomy between comforting familiarity and the potential disaster of France without children, drew on Merlin's marketing experience, while at the same time echoing his apparent lack of political views. The documentary also complemented Merlin's long-running family-orientated radio programme, *L'Alphabet de la famille*, which continued on Radio-Vichy even when Darquier had introduced a regular anti-Semitic slot.¹⁴² Merlin was, like the directors of 1941 films, also reflecting the wider views and beliefs of the Unoccupied Zone audience, through promoting the importance of the traditional family. In emphasising the necessity of the family for France, and its continued maintenance under Pétain, Merlin offered comfort to those members of the cinema audience who had sympathised with the need to increase the birthrate before the Occupation, at a time when comfort was in ever shorter supply. While Merlin's film would have offered further proof of Vichy's anti-feminist ideology, in which sexual difference was celebrated, it nevertheless reinforced the bourgeois view of the family,

¹⁴¹ See Miranda Pollard, p.40

¹⁴² Olivier Barrot and Raymond Chirat, p.79

as identified by Pollard.¹⁴³ If the message of *Le Jardin sans fleurs* was at times affected by poor acting, it nevertheless confirmed the dedication of filmmakers to continue to promote apparently comforting and consensual ideals even as the regime became increasingly collaborationist and exclusionary, again reflecting Pollard's argument that the casting of women in the role of mother was suitably consensual, with its appeal to the bourgeoisie, to boost popular support for the regime.¹⁴⁴ Merlin was thus able to further his own career and received financial gain through his role in making *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, the second documentary for which he was commissioned by the SGI, following on from the 1940 film *Première Valse*¹⁴⁵ and cementing his role as one of their favoured propagandists. Merlin was, in fact, later asked to make another semi-fictional film about mothers, *Le Culte des héros*, in 1943, which is discussed in chapter three.¹⁴⁶ Yet Merlin's dedication to the theme of the family was perhaps also due to his own identification with the subject, which happened, in *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, in his later film, and in his radio programme, to coincide with one of Vichy's core values of *famille*.

A return to the reassuring routine of work: Jean Morel's Travail

Whereas Merlin's film had returned to a theme, in the form of the family, that had previously been developed in *Jeunes de France*, Jean Morel's aptly-named documentary, *Travail*, built on the emphasis on the continuity of hard work that featured strongly in *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*. Although *Travail* was Morel's first documentary film, he had gained significant experience of filmmaking since his appointment as overall controller of documentary and newsreel film by Tixier-Vignancour. Morel had also voiced *Fidélité* and had thus worked with a skilled filmmaker in Naintré. In *Travail*, Morel produced one of the longest Vichy documentaries made during the course of the Occupation, at sixteen minutes, compared to the average of somewhere between six and

¹⁴³ Miranda Pollard, p.40

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁵ *Première Valse* (Dir: Louis Merlin, 1940)

¹⁴⁶ *La Fête des mères: le Culte des héros* (Dir: Louis Merlin, 1943)

fifteen minutes.¹⁴⁷ The film is a demonstration of the importance of the idea of work under Pétain and the continuity of the routine of daily working life. There is also an emphasis, as in *Jeunes de France*, on the strength of France and the physical and engineering prowess of the French under Pétain. Like the idea of a thriving French nation, the theme of work was one with which most viewers in the Unoccupied Zone could identify. Under the Popular Front, measures to decrease the working week had gained popular support from blue-collar workers and trade unionists, while Daladier's revision of the 40-hour working week in November 1938 was met with support from industrialists and even from some union members.¹⁴⁸ There was also much support for employing more efficient methods of engineering to boost French national standing.¹⁴⁹ In any case, the reaction to work-related legislation before the Occupation underlined the importance of work to the majority of the French people. During 1942, at a time of material hardship, work was a theme which would have been as resonant with an Unoccupied Zone audience as ever.

The SGI appears to have shared the importance placed on work by the Vichy leadership and indeed the viewing public. Not only did Galey commission Este's *Jeunes de France* in 1941, but he, and presumably Morel himself as the overall controller of documentaries, were willing to invest 3,550 francs in *Travail*,¹⁵⁰ while Galey was also happy to pay a further 2,550 francs to have further copies of the film made in 1943.¹⁵¹ While these costs are significantly lower than the 33,020 francs that the SGI offered Naintré to produce *Fidélité*, they nevertheless represent a significant investment given the increased material hardships of 1942, and a statement of confidence by Morel. Much as *Jeunes de France* and *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry* emphasised that France was hard at work under Pétain, *Travail* consistently attempts to portray a vision of the country in which work provides benefits to the nation, to the individual and to the family. Seizing on the popularity

¹⁴⁷ *La France en Marche* is a helpful example of the range in running times for documentaries: episodes ranged from eight to twenty-five minutes. See Brett Bowles, p.429. Other films included in the CNC collection run for considerably shorter periods.

¹⁴⁸ See Maurice Larkin, pp.55-62

¹⁴⁹ See Jackie Clarke, pp.30-32

¹⁵⁰ See memorandum between Galey and M. Sarrot, 30/10/1942, AN F42 125

¹⁵¹ Memo of 17/03/1943, AN F41 366

for the return to traditional family values which coincided with the introduction of Daladier's Family Code, the film explicitly associates hard work with happy, traditional family units, while also drawing on the character of Pétain to underline the Marshal's contribution to maintaining the ways of life that existed before the Occupation.

Morel's film, like *Jeunes de France*, simultaneously reflects some of the ideals behind the National Revolution while also presenting a version of France under Pétain which is at odds with everyday realities. Thus the incentives offered to those men who were willing to work hard appear in *Travail* while the checks on the possibilities of achieving such a vision of work across the entire nation are ignored altogether: the Occupation and the demands of the occupying powers are overlooked. In the same way, although Pétain's view that class struggle had been one of the many features of the decadent Third Republic comes across in the film through an emphasis on unity across social divides and across generations, there is no hint at the failure of the Marshal's favoured economic model, corporatism, to achieve any genuine benefits for ordinary workers.¹⁵² There is a real sense throughout *Travail* that work is close to the heart of the Vichy leadership, which was certainly true, with Pétain announcing as early as 1940 that 'tous les Français, ouvriers, cultivateurs, fonctionnaires, techniciens, patrons ont d'abord le devoir de travailler. Ceux qui méconnaîtraient ce devoir ne mériteraient plus leur qualité de citoyen.'¹⁵³ Yet the practical reasons for this emphasis are altogether ignored. The increasing need to meet German demands for material resources, including foodstuffs, from July 1942,¹⁵⁴ and to provide labour for Germany under the voluntary *Relève* scheme from June 1942, do not feature in the film.

The absence of material shortages in the film is a clear denial of the hardships faced by the majority of the audience, especially following the increased rationing limits applied in the latter half of the year. This is an approach which is not unique to *Travail* and is also

¹⁵² See for example Robert O. Paxton, p.212; Henry Rousso, 'L'économie: pénurie et modernisation,' in Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Eds.), *La France des années noires 1*, op. cit., p.478

¹⁵³ Philippe Pétain, *La France Nouvelle: Appels et Messages 17 juin 1940–17 juin 1941* (Paris: Fasquelles Éditeurs, 1941) p. 80

¹⁵⁴ Robert O. Paxton, p.314

developed in Masson's *Nourrir la France*, which demonstrates how rural ways of life continue and how the government is enabling farmers to feed France. Certainly, as a propaganda film, it is perhaps unsurprising that it is not a truthful depiction of all aspects of life under Pétain. Yet the fact that audiences viewed documentaries as largely 'educational' and even 'truthful' before and during the Occupation means that it is important to explore the precise nature of these oversights in order to establish why documentary films promoted life under Occupation in this way. The absence of references to the *Relève* offers an informative point of comparison with other propaganda, including even *France-Actualités*, which promoted the scheme in a report from November 1942, in which families, friends and dignitaries gather on a platform at Lyon station to wave off volunteers, followed shortly by the return of some Prisoners of War from Germany.¹⁵⁵ Several posters were also produced by the SGI to promote the *Relève* and to incentivise workers to volunteer. One such example features a central panel, with a drawing of a young, athletic man, surrounded by images of the benefits that he will reap from participating in the *Relève*, including liberating his elders, pursuing an adventure, discovering a new country and learning a trade.¹⁵⁶ While there is a photograph of Prisoners of War to illustrate the boy's contribution to liberating his elders, and of a man working a lathe to illustrate the new trade, the other two possibilities are illustrated only by drawings, betraying their fantastical nature. In another image, departing French workers wave from the windows of a train carriage on the side of which is scrawled the caption 'Il en reste...relevez-les!'¹⁵⁷ The slogan of the poster exclaims that 'La Relève continue!'

Yet the *Relève*, and the German occupiers, are altogether absent from *Travail*, which appears, from archival evidence, to have been released *after* the introduction of the voluntary

¹⁵⁵ 'La Relève continue,' *France-Actualités*, 27/11/1942, Pathé-Gaumont archives, FA 1942155

¹⁵⁶ 'Jeune: veux tu...', Designer unknown, 1942, held at the Archives départementales de l'Allier, Fonds 1J

¹⁵⁷ 'La Relève continue!' Designer unknown, 1942, held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (henceforth BNF), ENT QB-1 (1942)-ROUL

scheme.¹⁵⁸ Instead, the film offers a reassuring image of France very much in her normal rhythm and routine of work and thriving under Pétain. Throughout *Travail*, Morel demonstrates the inter-generational aspect of work and the benefits to the family, with the emphasis firmly on France capable of providing for herself. The documentary opens with a shot of some children building a sandcastle. As one child finishes the castle, the voiceover (possibly Morel himself following his earlier work on *Fidélité*) claims that ‘[l’homme] veut reproduire les gestes de son père au travail.’ Other children are shown to be playing with building bricks and constructing mini-houses, followed by shots of boys with arts and craft materials. There is a noticeable absence of women at work throughout the film, unlike in either *Jeunes de France* or *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*, where they appear in either domestic or comparatively lowly secretarial positions. This is, indeed, one aspect of *Travail* that reflects the reality of the policies of the National Revolution and for Paxton, Vichy typically preferred women ‘barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen.’¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the relative absence of women, almost always confined to a domestic setting, was not necessarily extremist or exclusionary, as the British documentary *They also serve* highlighted, even if other British-produced films also focussed on the contribution of women to the war effort.¹⁶⁰ In the opening shots of *Travail*, it is boys who are pictured constructing toy houses and sandcastles, as though in childhood apprenticeship for the roles they will play in later life, in line with Vichy’s official policy of differentiated curricula for boys and girls at school,¹⁶¹ in further reinforcement of what Pollard has identified as a means of ‘returning’ women to the home through education, and reinforcing sexual difference.¹⁶² As the documentary progresses, adolescent boys are shown meeting the Vichy equivalent of careers advisors, who apply a psychiatric test in which the teenagers are asked to comment on a number of drawings on a card. Based on their responses, the children are then given their future career options. Referencing Pétain’s speech from Commentry the previous year, the

¹⁵⁸ See for example the memorandum between Galey and M. Sarrot, 30/10/1942, AN F42 125

¹⁵⁹ Robert O. Paxton, p.168

¹⁶⁰ See for example *Auxiliary Territorial Service, ATS* (Dir: Hugh Stewart, 1941) IWM UKY 309

¹⁶¹ See Eric Alary et al, p.285

¹⁶² Miranda Pollard, p.70

voiceover states that through ‘le sueur de son front, [l’homme] assura l’avenir de son pays.’¹⁶³ A string of boys are then shown in their new jobs, including a cotton weaver, a metal filer and a pottery maker. One fortunate boy shows, according to the voiceover, ‘une dextérité parfaitement développée’ and therefore is despatched to turn some metal on a lathe. For male viewers, at least, this sequence demonstrates that there is a bright future for children in France, and that the country collectively is working hard under Pétain.

The film goes on to show further clips of men in manual roles which emphasise France’s continued industrial power, with shots of coal miners and fishermen. The suggestion is that these resources and produce, the coal and the fish, will ensure that France will be well-supplied thanks to the efforts of these French labourers. The voiceover states that ‘leur peine est sacrée’ and that ‘sans [l’activité de ces Français], point d’autre activité.’ The formula of ‘sans [le travailleur], point [de travail]’ is repeated for several minutes, emphasising the essential role played by numerous professions, including miners and construction workers. Morel strives for reassurance in the film, emphasising that work and traditional methods of work are continuing as before the Occupation. Yet the stark reality of the situation, that two-thirds of France’s Gross Domestic Product was diverted to the German occupiers, who controlled some 75 per cent of France’s industry, is overlooked.¹⁶⁴

The message of *Travail* is nevertheless unambiguous, namely work continues to benefit the French people and the French nation as a whole. The benefits of work, in terms of *allocations familiales* and membership of the ‘community,’ and the continued need for work are made apparent in the documentary. Neither the title nor the content of the film are especially subtle. Nevertheless, the film emphasises work as an essential value of the French nation under Pétain, in which opportunities are boundless, while also helping to nurture the traditional French family values that were well-supported before the Occupation. Although its message is not subtle, the film is well-produced, with a combination of dramatic

¹⁶³ See Philippe Pétain, ‘Discours du 1er mai 1941,’ in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, pp.127-131

¹⁶⁴ Ian Ousby, *Occupation: The Ordeal of France* (London: Pimlico, 1997) p.68

soundtrack and polished shots of the world of work. With its graphics on the Organisational Committees and non-fiction approach, the film appears to *explain* rather than to persuade. The non-fiction model appears designed to offer reassurance to the French and to encourage work through emphasising the physical and monetary benefits of work, and to demonstrate that the French community, and by extension the whole nation, appears to be working as hard as ever.

Like the vision of French autonomy portrayed in the 1941 films *Jeunes de France* and in *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*, the reassuring image of French industrial might outlined in Morel's documentary is, of course, fictitious. The comforting sense of the French nation pulling together, harnessing the material riches of the *métropole* and the Empire and providing for the traditional French family is achieved by Morel only through a selective approach to contemporary realities. While Morel does, in fact, reference Vichy's genuine policies towards the world of work, including the *allocations familiales* and the *comités d'organisation*, and there is even a fleeting suggestion that the regime is righting the wrongs of the Republic, in a rare suggestion of distinction from the past in Vichy documentary film, this is far from an accurate picture of the realities of work under Vichy. The contrast between the real hardships of the Occupation and the portrayal of France in *Travail* is illustrated in particular in the film's failure to mention the extent to which France is providing not for herself, but for Germany, and in the documentary's ignorance of the absence in industry of the 1.5 million French Prisoners of War who were still in German captivity.¹⁶⁵ The lack of references to the *Relève* in a film dedicated to the importance of work, and at a time when posters readily promoted the scheme, offers further evidence of Morel's apparent decision to downplay and overlook realities to develop a moderate, and comforting, version of France under Pétain.

Morel's trajectory at Vichy was one of service to the regime. From his initial involvement with documentaries and newsreels under Tixier-Vignancour in the autumn of 1940, Morel

¹⁶⁵ Yves Durand, p.261

had gradually built up experience of filmmaking and working with Naintré on *Fidélité* exposed him to the techniques of a professional director. Morel's continued role under Vichy after the release of *Travail*, as the correspondent for the Unoccupied Zone for *France-Actualités*¹⁶⁶ suggests that his career was not harmed by directing *Travail*. Indeed, that the SGI commissioned further copies of the film in 1943 suggests that Galey, with whom Morel worked closely at the SGI, was pleased with the results of Morel's foray into directing. This request to create more copies would also suggest that the film was commercially successful, although existing archives have not recorded the success of *Travail* in the same precise manner as *Fidélité*. The reference to the distinctions between Vichy and the Republic hinted at in Morel's film can perhaps be explained by the director's loyal service to the regime, which possibly also accounts for the reference to Pétain's speech of the 1st of May 1941 on the occasion of the Fête du Travail, following the same techniques employed in earlier films of associating the personality of the Marshal with images of France working hard. In this regard, as with other documentary makers, Morel was simply reflecting the continued admiration amongst the viewing public for Pétain as an inspirational figure in 1942; as Laborie notes: 'Le Maréchal Pétain devient de plus en plus l'objet d'un rite de vénération.'¹⁶⁷ Morel's film did, of course, acknowledge some of the realities of the policies of the National Revolution, yet *Travail* also offers a far more reassuring image of work and the family under Vichy than was actually the case. This moderate portrayal is harder to fathom for a man who appears to have served the regime loyally for all four years of Vichy rule. Perhaps, like Este, Morel identified documentary film with the same escapism as feature film, following Naintré's approach to filmmaking. It would appear unlikely that Morel would have wished to undermine Vichy and indeed the vision of France is wholeheartedly positive. Yet it also seems that Morel, like his colleagues at the SGI and indeed his fellow documentary makers, perhaps shared the same sympathy for themes that

¹⁶⁶ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.54. Coupan did not request permission from the occupiers for Morel to travel to the Occupied Zone. See 'Liste des personnes de la société appelées à travailler en zone occupée: nouvelles demandes,' 18/05/1942, AN F42 119

¹⁶⁷ Pierre Laborie, p.267

had been popular before the Occupation, like the traditional family, and a strong image of France. Morel might also have been aware through Prefect and *contrôles techniques* reports, as a senior figure in the SGI, of the increasing willingness amongst the French population to return to life without the German occupiers; in June 1942, in fact, the Prefect reports noted that ‘ceux qui espèrent une victoire allemande demeurent l’exception.’¹⁶⁸ For these French viewers, the vision of a France in which traditions were maintained without the divisive policies introduced in 1942, including, notably, the *Relève*, might indeed have appeared a welcome escape.

Back to the land: the comforting rhythm of rural life in Nourrir la France

The images of France hard at work to support the nation and the family in *Travail* resonated with the three values of Vichy’s National Revolution. The scenes of French men working in factories and in mines, combined with shots of happy families enjoying dinner provided by the father’s efforts, offered a reassuring, if misleading, impression of life under Pétain.

Where Morel had followed Philippe Este’s lead in *Jeunes de France* by demonstrating the range of settings in which work was conducted under Pétain as it had been before the Occupation, Jean Masson focussed exclusively on rural traditions in his, apparently, self-funded documentary, *Nourrir la France*. There is little existing archival evidence about Masson; he was not an SGI figure in the same way Coupan or Morel were, and he appears, according to correspondence between the SGI’s accountant M. Thuillier and M. Paoletti, the Inspecteur-Général des Finances at Vichy, to have left France in 1943 to reside in Morocco.¹⁶⁹ Masson was evidently keen to make films for the regime and provided, according to the same report, some 32,000 francs of his own money to produce *Nourrir la France*, a similar cost as the joint Pathé- and SGI-funded *Fidélité*. Having travelled to Morocco, curiously after the Allied invasion of North Africa, Masson submitted an expenses

¹⁶⁸ ‘Synthèse des Rapports des Préfets de la Zone non-occupée pour le mois de mai 1942,’ 15/06/1942, IHTP

¹⁶⁹ ‘Rapport de M. Thuillier, Expert-Comptable à Monsieur l’Inspecteur des Finances, Directeur de l’Administration Générale,’ 08/05/1943, AN F41 92

claim to the SGI in which he asked for the not-insignificant sum of 90,963.75 francs for *Nourrir la France*, *Jeanne de France* and *Feux de la St-Jean*, of which *Nourrir la France* was easily the most expensive. Masson may well have been held in high regard by the SGI, since Thuillier's report agrees even to the reimbursement of Masson's outward travel to the Maghreb.

That *Nourrir la France* proved comparatively expensive, just short of the cost of Naintré's rather epic *Fidélité* and well above the cost of the 16 minute-long *Travail*, does raise questions about Masson's motives in making the film. Indeed, it seems unlikely that all of the 32,000 francs were used in the production of the film, which is of poorer quality than Morel's production. However, the fact that the SGI was willing to reimburse Masson's cost in full, might suggest that the SGI leadership, with Galey and Morel especially, shared the reassuring vision of rural life which appears in the film. Masson certainly seized the opportunity to make a documentary dedicated exclusively to the ongoing traditions of rural France; the film demonstrates a variety of agricultural techniques and projects the consistent message that the rhythms of the countryside and the seasons continue as normal under Pétain. Like both Morel and Merlin's films, *Nourrir la France* contains references to genuine Vichy policies, with the idealistic portrayal of the countryside complementing the regime's 'return to the land' incentives.

Yet Masson also follows the techniques of his contemporaries by ignoring the realities behind this legislation. Thus the practical reasons for the encouragement of families to re-create the family farm, namely the severe food shortages in 1942 caused in part by the imposition of quotas to feed the Reich, and the absence of the 1.5 Prisoners of War in German captivity, of whom 36 per cent were farmers, are overlooked.¹⁷⁰ Masson, then, only achieves this representation of rural France continuing as before the war through the oversight of the Occupation and the restrictions on French production. In the same way that Morel fails to mention that much of the fruits of French labour in *Travail* are destined for

¹⁷⁰ Richard Vinen, p.209

Germany, Masson likewise neglects to inform the viewer that far from the image of France providing for herself as she always has done, French produce will largely be consumed over the Rhine. The opulence of the French foodstuffs on offer in the film, including eggs, potatoes and meat, also suggests that such produce is in ready supply under Pétain. Yet if anything food was decreasingly available by the time of *Nourrir la France*'s release in 1942. Rationing was stricter than ever, and food was little short of an obsession for the majority of the French people. Although many existing first-hand accounts of the time were recorded in the Occupied Zone, audiences of *Nourrir la France* in the Unoccupied Zone would also have known real food shortages. In Marseille, Toulouse, Clermont-Ferrand and Montpellier, for example, the average weight of a child was up to 7kg less than it had been in 1938.¹⁷¹ In Paris, Jean Guéhenno recorded on the 14th February 1942 that: 'Si je n'ai rien écrit dans ces cahiers c'est [...] que nous avons faim.'¹⁷² The Paris diaries of Madeleine Blaess in 1942, a student enrolled at the Sorbonne, also testify to the preoccupation with food amongst the French people. One telling entry for 11th December 1942 notes that Blaess 'made crêpes without eggs or milk.'¹⁷³ Food was clearly a concern for the French people as a whole, rendering Masson's portrayal of the continued production of French food an altogether fantastical, and arguably escapist, image of life for French audiences.

Masson's ignorance of the very real hardships faced by his viewers is sustained throughout the film, except for the opening, which features a sequence of rural shots, including an open window of a farm building which acts as a metaphor for young people escaping to the towns. The male voiceover announces that 'par la fenêtre ouverte, considérons les alentours.' As the camera pans to an empty field, the narrator continues, 'on est installé à l'abandon.' Yet this scene is followed by shots of middle-aged male farmers undertaking various agricultural tasks like ploughing and grape-picking, developing the sense that all is not lost, that this food is in plentiful supply and that these mundane, if essential, agricultural tasks continue as

¹⁷¹ Eric Alary et al, p.161

¹⁷² Jean Guéhenno, p.239

¹⁷³ Madeline Blaess, 11/12/1942, Unpublished war diaries, University of Sheffield Library Special Collections, MS296

before the Occupation. If the pre-Occupation years witnessed some movement away from the family farm, the rest of the film sets out to demonstrate continuity with traditional farming methods, ensuring the ready availability of food.

In the next sequence, this continuity of rural life is developed with shots of a variety of produce, again emphasising the capacity of French farmers to produce a range of goods under Pétain. This clear link between continued physical labour and produce reflects Morel's emphasis in *Travail* on the individual and collective benefits of hard work, and suggests that the fruits of rural work are still very much in supply. In the next scene, a farmer is pictured scything the field by hand, demonstrating the regime's continued protection of rural traditions, and the importance of the land, in a reference to one of Vichy's genuine policies. The narrator affirms that 'la terre, elle, est toujours là, bien entendu à sa place.' There is no suggestion that anything in this scene is out of the ordinary, with farmers continuing to work the land and to produce food for the nation under Vichy. Masson harnesses this scene of a *paysan* using hand tools as a reassuring reminder of the strength of rural traditions, yet he also overlooks the real, and challenging, absence of horses under the Occupation, which rendered agricultural work far harder than it had in fact been before the arrival of the Germans.¹⁷⁴ While reflecting Vichy's ideological ambitions to restore rural France to the traditions of the past, this scene actually appears to claim that this is the norm, rather than an aspirational image, denying the difficulties faced by farmers because of the realities of Vichy's project. In the same way, although the film offers a vision of rural life which might have been appealing to urban French people, the film ignores the barriers, especially the lack of suitable training and equipment, to convincing sufficient numbers of French people to take up the subsidies offered by Vichy to return to the family farm. This in itself is rather surprising, given that the documentary is dedicated exclusively to the promotion of rural values. Had the film advertised these opportunities, it may possibly have had some impact

¹⁷⁴ See Richard Vinen, pp.228-229

on increasing the take-up of the subsidies, whereas in the event, only 1,561 families seized this chance, of whom 409 promptly returned to the towns.¹⁷⁵

In the final scene, Masson emphasises again the continuity of the gentle rhythm and beauty of rural life under Pétain, as a shot of a field appears on screen, with thriving crops blowing in the wind. To accompany this final, reassuring image of French traditions protected by Vichy, Masson follows the same technique employed by Este, Naintré and Morel in making a direct link between the actions of the Marshal and this continuity of rural life. The narrator thus reproduces a line from Pétain's 25th June 1940 speech to conclude the film, namely 'nous avons appris il y a longtemps que la terre ne ment pas.'¹⁷⁶ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, in the only reference to the film in his work, notes that 'les paroles du Maréchal servent d'exergue aux documentaires.'¹⁷⁷ Bertin-Maghit does not record, however, that this reproduction of Pétain's speech in *Nourrir la France* is, in fact, the occasion of a rare phenomenon in Vichy documentary film, since it also complements a contemporary poster which sought to promote the emphasis on rural values under the National Revolution.¹⁷⁸ This poster, produced in 1941, shows a hand drawing of Pétain greeting a *paysan*, who appears with his plough pulled by two robust horses, as apparently a group of young men from the *Chantiers* use pickaxes to work the land in the background. While the poster utilises the same claim that 'la terre, elle, ne ment pas' as Masson's film, there are nevertheless competing messages. Whereas Masson's documentary appears to portray horseless farmers as normal in rural France, the presence of the horses in the poster suggests that the horse-pulled plough is the typical method employed by farmers. In the same way, Masson emphasises the fruits of the farmers' labour, whereas the single *paysan* in the poster appears not to have actually produced anything. Masson's version of rural life, with its use of real

¹⁷⁵ Robert O. Paxton, p.208

¹⁷⁶ Philippe Pétain, 'Appel du 25 juin 1940,' in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, p.66

¹⁷⁷ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.196

¹⁷⁸ On this poster, see Christian Faure, *Le Projet culturel de Vichy* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1989) p.174

farmers producing real food, thus appears all the more reassuring, even if both examples use the personality of Pétain to underline the Marshal's commitment to protecting rural values.

Masson's portrayal of rural life under Vichy is also at odds with the Marshal's own depiction of the importance of the *paysannerie* and of the promotion of rural traditions on the radio. In a speech of the 20th of April 1941, broadcast on Radio-Vichy, Pétain suggested that 'l'immense désastre matériel et moral qui a bouleversé notre malheureux pays, et dont il souffre encore, a atteint profondément la paysannerie.'¹⁷⁹ This admission of the difficulties facing farmers in Pétain's speech does not reflect the version of life which appears in *Nourrir la France*, where farmers appear perfectly capable of producing food for the nation. Whereas even Pétain acknowledged that rural life was hard, and that there were shortages of machinery, Masson's documentary ignores these altogether, projecting an image of apparent normality. This offers further evidence of Vichy documentaries' tendency to promote an apparently more reassuring view of life under Vichy than other propaganda; not only is Masson's film different to the poster intended to promote rural traditions, but its message also differs from the Marshal's radio address, designed to speak directly to farmers.

Why, then, was Masson's documentary so different from the approaches to the same theme, the protection and promotion of rural values, in other propaganda? Why did Masson appear to project an altogether more reassuring image of France under Pétain, with no shortages of resources and in which produce appeared to benefit the nation? The film is an inherently positive promotion of life under the Vichy regime, and its central theme was close to the Marshal's heart, as demonstrated in his speech of the 25th of June 1940, and the documentary reflected the general promotion of rural values which formed part of the government's 'retour à la terre' agenda. It thus seems unlikely that Masson, as with his fellow filmmakers, set out to undermine Vichy. Yet if Masson's film does offer a reassuring image of a France truly capable of feeding herself, there are nevertheless some intriguing inconsistencies with the regime's policies. Masson's failure to explicitly advertise the subsidies for families to

¹⁷⁹ Philippe Pétain, 'Appel du 20 avril 1941,' in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, p.123

return to their family farms perhaps suggests that Masson did not wholeheartedly accept the official Vichy line. In the same way, Masson's ignoring of everyday hardships exaggerates the level of food available, which was at odds with the everyday experiences of the audience, and suggests a calculated attempt at providing a comforting, if false, image of continuity of normal life under Vichy. That Masson ignores the presence of the German occupiers and the absence of Prisoners of War is not altogether surprising, given that this was a trend espoused by other filmmakers, and that neither phenomenon appears in radio or poster propaganda promoting the same theme, but it again seems to counteract Pétain's tacit admission of the Occupation in his reference to 'moral and material disasters' faced by France. Masson was not, then, offering an accurate representation of rural life, of the food situation in urban areas or indeed of every aspect of Vichy's legislation alluded to in this film.

Nourrir la France is therefore a positive portrayal of life under Vichy, but not without its deviations from the official line of the regime. So did Masson seek to project a more comforting version of events to try to offer reassurance to the audience, or for his own benefit, or indeed for both? It seems likely that Masson felt passionately about rural affairs, since he funded the film himself, and he may well have realised the potentially comforting impact that scenes of continued supplies of food under Vichy could have on the audience. Yet the scenes of opulence in the film could easily have had the opposite effect for some audience members, deprived of sufficient food and aware, if not of the German demands on French food production, but certainly of the presence of the occupiers elsewhere in the country. Masson might well have been aware that his film would also provoke some negative reactions amongst the viewing public.

The director's decision to move to North Africa in 1943, after the Allied invasion, is rather intriguing. In the absence of any further evidence, it might well have been that Masson had family or a second home in Morocco. Nevertheless, that the SGI reimbursed Masson's travel costs suggests that he chose that particular moment to produce another documentary in a

location which was no longer in Vichy hands. The telling line in Thuilier's report that 'M. Masson vient de partir au Maroc avec des sommes dont le montant il ignore,'¹⁸⁰ suggests that Masson went to North Africa already armed with some funds. If Masson did indeed set out to the Maghreb to produce a film, does this mean that the SGI and Galey in particular, sanctioned the initial funding for a film which might potentially have detracted from the images of Vichy sovereignty in the Empire developed in other films, given the Allied control of North Africa? Might Masson, in fact, have been more sympathetic to the Allies, and possibly the Gaullists, than to Vichy? The use of Pétain's speech in the film implies sympathy for the Marshal along the lines of Masson's fellow filmmakers, and indeed the majority of his audience, but that does not necessarily suggest support for the Vichy authorities. With an absence of a political track record, and just three films to his name during the Occupation, we cannot draw firm conclusions regarding Masson's views. Nevertheless, his trip to North Africa at a politically-sensitive time for the Vichy leadership raises questions about the motivations of Galey, and the accountant, Thuilier, in sanctioning an apparently SGI-funded visit by a filmmaker to Morocco after the country had fallen to the British, Americans and Gaullists. In any case, pressure from the Propaganda Abteilung, which led to an SGI circular in July 1943 banning films about the Empire¹⁸¹ meant that such a film, if it was made, was never released.

Whatever Masson's motivations, *Nourrir la France* offers a version of Vichy's ruralist policies that is idyllic and essentially escapist, and for audiences might have proved comforting and reassuring, in that life continued as before the Occupation, or indeed provocative, in light of the food shortages. Given the subject choices of Masson's other documentaries, *Jeanne de France* and *Feux de la Saint-Jean*, Masson was probably aware of the desire on the part of audience members to 'forget' everyday life and seek escapism in the cinema; *Nourrir la France* is certainly closer to a fictional account of rural life than a factual

¹⁸⁰ 'Rapport de M. Thuillier, Expert-Comptable à Monsieur l'Inspecteur des Finances, Directeur de l'Administration Générale,' 08/05/1943, AN F41 92

¹⁸¹ See memorandum of 23/07/1943, AN F41 83

portrayal. It is clear that Masson followed the same techniques as other filmmakers to develop the documentary's vision of a France in which food is plentiful. In so doing, Masson maintained the consistent approach to documentary film throughout 1942 in offering a less realistic, more idyllic version of Vichy ideals and policy, and on a broader scale an altogether more reassuring image of the National Revolution than, for example, the anti-Semitic programmes that appeared on Radio-Vichy in the same year, and contemporary pro-collaboration, pro-Relève posters.

iv. Conclusions. Vichy documentary film 1940-1942: towards a brighter future?

During the first two years of Vichy rule and German Occupation, documentary film produced, sanctioned or funded by the Vichy authorities was broadly characterised by an attempt to promote a moderate and overall reassuring image of life under Pétain, especially, given the prominence of themes which were popular amongst the bourgeoisie before the Occupation. From *Dakar* in 1940 through to *Nourrir la France*, there is little explicit content in any of these films to suggest that this was the propaganda of an overtly exclusionary and extreme-right regime. These films each present life under Vichy as similar, if not always identical, to everyday occurrences before the Occupation by exploring themes which were either already the subject of popular support before the Occupation, as with the Empire in *Dakar*, *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger*; the family, in *Jeunes de France* and *Le Jardin sans fleurs*; and work in *Le Maréchal Pétain* and *Travail*; or were part of French tradition, as in *Nourrir la France*. The inclusion of the French national symbols, the *tricolore* and the *Marseillaise*, which appear in the majority of the films, provided further evidence of the continuity of the same strong French nation that had existed before 1940, while also implying a nationwide aspect to the films' version of daily life which denied the realities of the Occupation and the division of France into two principal zones. Each of the films also utilised the persona of Pétain to directly link the version of life portrayed with the efforts of

the Marshal, thereby utilising his popularity to demonstrate the impact of his government on maintaining traditional standards of everyday life.

The motivations of these filmmakers, while difficult to establish for certain given the absence of substantial evidence, appear to have been driven by a wish to promote the Vichy regime, since these films offer a broadly positive portrayal of life under Occupation. The mobilisation of the Pétain cult in each of these documentaries draws on a theme which was consistently popular throughout the Occupation. The presence of Pétain in each of the documentaries might, indeed, demonstrate some sympathy for the Marshal and his government on the part of the filmmakers; given the popularity of Pétain throughout the first two years of the Occupation, and indeed thereafter, it is possible that the filmmakers shared in this devotion. The images and rhetoric of the Marshal which are reproduced in these films would have been familiar to the Unoccupied Zone audience, and might also have been aimed at encouraging ticket sales by associating Pétain with the work of these directors. *Dakar* and *Fidélité* appear to have been commercial successes, although their popularity might also have been due to the emphasis on themes which were already the subject of support before the Occupation, in the Empire, and the particular context of the cinema, with its offer of warmth and a way of passing the time, as the inclusion of Pétainist imagery, and indeed they may have been shown in conjunction with popular and appealing feature films. In any case there is very little about these films that detracts from a positive image of the Marshal, and by association, the Vichy regime. The emphasis on the maintenance of traditions in everyday life that is such a strong feature of these documentaries appears, then, to have been aimed at promoting, rather than hindering, the Vichy authorities and the National Revolution.

Yet the inconsistencies between the messages conveyed in these films and the version of daily life that they project, on the one hand, and the realities of the National Revolution, the Occupation and the messages conveyed in other propaganda on the other, raise further questions about the aims of the filmmakers. While Morel, Este, Merlin and Coupan were all either SGI personnel or favoured propagandists, Naintré and Masson were not strictly

speaking servants of the regime, and their work for Vichy concluded at the end of 1942. The SGI personnel's work on Vichy documentaries enabled them to further their own careers, suggesting that they would not have sought to undermine the Vichy authorities.

Nevertheless, the failure to reflect the realities of the policies introduced under the National Revolution in each of their films, and their failure to reflect the realities of everyday life, suggest that these men perhaps identified the cinema as a space in which to maintain popular themes in the absence of divisive ideals, perhaps with the aim of increasing popularity for the Vichy regime. This approach might also suggest that these men shared the viewing public's appreciation of themes from before the Occupation, especially the importance of the Empire and of the maintenance of the traditional family. Morel's decision not to promote collaboration in general and the *Relève* in particular in *Travail* is arguably the most remarkable feature of the work of this foursome. Had Morel wished to promote every aspect of Vichy policy in the interests of the regime, then he might surely have been expected to offer a positive portrayal of working in, and for, Germany in a film dedicated solely to the theme of work. Morel, as overall head of documentary and newsreel production at the SGI, must have been well aware that the *Relève* would require some positive propaganda in order to become a success and the *contrôles techniques* and Prefect reports from 1942 reveal the 'hatred' felt by many French people in both zones towards the Germans. Even if, in the absence of conclusive evidence, the film was produced in late 1941 and then released in 1942,¹⁸² it would not be unexpected for a senior SGI figure to promote the broader benefits of collaboration, since volunteering for working in Germany had been possible long before the imposition of the *Relève*.¹⁸³ Yet instead Morel focusses on work in exclusively French contexts, with exclusively French benefits. For Morel, Coupan, Merlin and Este, while documentary film proved fruitful for their later careers under Vichy, they seem nevertheless to have decided to obscure aspects to the National Revolution that they felt might prove

¹⁸² Archival research has revealed no precise date for the release of the film in France; papers relating to the financing of the film date from November 1942, after the imposition of the *Relève*. See memorandum between Galey and M. Sarrot, 30/10/1942, AN F42 125. The catalogue of the *Centre national de la cinématographie* suggests the film may have been produced in 1941.

¹⁸³ See Henry Rouso, 'L'économie: pénurie et modernisation,' *op. cit.*, p.470

unpopular. While on the whole this developed a distinctly positive version of the Vichy regime, this approach might also hint at some sympathy for the maintenance of themes which appealed to the majority of the audience and thus offered a more moderate image of the National Revolution than that provided by their contemporaries working in posters (as with the pro-Relève images) and in radio (with the introduction of anti-Semitic programmes on Radio-Vichy in 1942).

Masson and Naintré's films raise different questions. For Naintré, *Fidélité*, with its significant financial success, might well have proved lucrative, although it seems to have been this professional filmmaker's last contribution to Vichy propaganda. Like Masson, who also, eventually, gained financially from *Nourrir la France*, Naintré was not an SGI figure. While the images that appear in the two directors' films also represent a positive portrayal of life under Vichy, from the maintenance of the Empire in Naintré's *Fidélité* to the continuity of agricultural traditions in Masson's *Nourrir la France*, they also demonstrate a vision of the National Revolution which, like their colleagues', is distinct from reality and from other propaganda. Naintré's work is very similar to Coupan's *Dakar*, with its focus on the military strength of France in the Empire, emphasising French dominance at a time when this was rapidly diminishing. Naintré, and indeed Coupan, offer a version of French control of the Empire which to Unoccupied Zone audiences might well have provoked feelings of patriotism, suggesting that France was well-equipped for any military event. Given that Naintré worked closely with Morel on *Fidélité*, it also seems unlikely that he would have set out to undermine the regime. Yet Naintré's expensive, and rather grand, portrayal of life across the Empire, hints at a current of *Vichyssois résistance* aimed at the German occupiers, with its continual emphasis on French military power. That Naintré appears not to have worked again for the SGI also suggests that, despite his working relationship with Morel, he did not wish to make more films for Vichy, raising further doubts about his loyalty to some aspects of the regime's politics. In the same way, Masson's remarkable decision to leave on an expenses-paid trip to Morocco at a time when the Allies had established control of North

Africa raises doubts about the way he viewed the Vichy authorities. Masson's *Nourrir la France* is a positive demonstration of rural life under Pétain, yet the emphasis on the abundance of food apparently enjoyed by some protagonists in the film, while suggesting that France is capable of providing for herself, was sure to provoke some negative reactions on the part of hungry French viewers. Although Masson might also have wished to emphasise the continuity of the rhythm of rural life through choosing to depict the ready availability of food in his film, he might also have been aware of the potential for these images to detract from Vichy's popularity. Masson's subsequent departure for Morocco with some SGI funds also suggests an unwillingness to continue to serve Vichy.

In the case of Masson and Naintré in particular, by the end of 1942, Vichy documentary, while offering a positive portrayal of the Vichy authorities, also showed signs of an anticipation of life after the Occupation, and of a brighter future ahead. Masson's emphasis on the productivity of France both demonstrated the potential for France to maintain these traditions after the Occupation, while also potentially undermining Vichy's track record on rationing and on providing food for people across France. Naintré's film, like that of Coupan, meanwhile, offered an image of a militarily-strong France with support across the globe. Although it is difficult to establish the precise motivations of these filmmakers, the work of Naintré and Masson offered a version of France in which the occupiers were absent and France was the same strong nation it had always been. To a lesser extent, the work of Coupan, with his portrayal of the solid defence of the French Empire at Dakar; of Merlin, with his promotion of the value of motherhood to ensure a strong French future; of Este, with his portrayal of physically strong French youth; and of Morel, with his vision of a hardworking France in which the whole nation benefited from the fruits of collective labour, all developed the appearance of an independent, and strong, French nation, embodied in Este and Coupan's work with the national symbols of *tricolore* and *Marseillaise*. The images conveyed in these films by the end of 1942 thus offered reassurance to audiences, especially the bourgeoisie sympathetic to the need to maintain the birthrate and the Empire and of the

continuity of aspects of life from before the Occupation, while also offering some hope to viewers of a brighter future for France away from the constraints of German Occupation. Over the following two years of Vichy rule, with the entire nation subject to the everyday presence of the Germans, filmmakers continued to produce documentaries for the SGI. As the following chapter suggests, the motivations of these men were increasingly nuanced, raising further questions about the loyalties and ideals of Vichy's chosen directors.

Chapter III

Reassurance in continued French strength? Maintaining a moderate image of the

National Revolution in Vichy documentary film in 1943

TO mark the third anniversary of the *Légion française des combattants* in summer 1943, commemorations took place across the south of France, in the former Free Zone. In Marseille, the local *Légionnaires* gathered to pay homage to those that had given their lives for France in past conflicts. The mixture of young, military-aged men in uniform and a group of older veterans dressed mostly in civilian clothing, but with berets and medals proudly on display, took part in a procession from the city centre to the vieux port, where they duly saluted the sacrifices made by men from across the Empire. As the *tricolore* fluttered in the wind, three serving soldiers, each from different parts of the world, symbolically paid tribute to their ancestors who had fought for the motherland by lighting a flame which they then sent out to sea.

Captured in the 1943 documentary film, *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*,¹ this scene of French patriotism, heightened by the appearance of the *tricolore*, championed the ongoing importance of the Empire and the maintenance of national strength. The appearance of these strong, physically fit young men in military uniform from France and from the Empire, gave the impression of a proud, independent French nation thriving under Pétain. In these images of French military prowess, there was nothing to suggest any constraints on the autonomy of the nation. Yet by 1943, the French Empire was virtually lost to the Allies, the Gaullists or the Axis powers, the entire country was occupied by the Germans, and the only military that France had possessed since the defeat of June 1940, the Armistice Army, had been dissolved. The political autonomy of the Vichy regime was, in fact, increasingly fictitious at the time of the *Légion*'s third anniversary. The political realities, like the German Occupation, the loss of Empire and collaborationist policies such as the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (STO) and the newly-created *Milice*, are altogether ignored in the film. In the

¹ *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* (Dir: Henri Clerc, 1943)

same way, the everyday hardships faced by the French population and the huge decline in public support for the regime, are likewise overlooked in favour of a portrayal of life under Vichy of it continuing largely as it had done before the Occupation, with a thriving Empire and strong military presence in which the French could take pride.

Troisième anniversaire de la Légion, in fact, reflects the approach taken in the wider corpus of Vichy documentaries in the final two years of the Occupation. In the same way that Yves Naintré and Jean Masson in particular, and to some extent Jean Coupan, Philippe Este, Jean Morel and Louis Merlin, had projected visions of a strong, autonomous France far from the exclusionary realities of the Occupation, documentary makers in 1943 developed this trend. In the penultimate year of Vichy rule, the directors appointed by the SGI focussed not only on the continuity of life as before the Occupation, but also maintained the image of a powerful and dynamic nation under Pétain, which increasingly attracted patriotic sentiment. The films of 1943 continued to obscure the hardships of the Occupation, while also emphasising moderate aspects of Vichy's policies and ideals. That documentaries which were produced, commissioned, sanctioned or funded by the SGI in 1943 failed to acknowledge legislation that was promoted in other propaganda is all the more remarkable given the increasingly repressive political context. The introduction of the STO, for example, in February 1943, was the subject of attention in the written press, on the radio and even in newsreel footage. Yet documentary films, including the likes of *Chefs de demain*, focussed on the work of young Frenchmen, did not promote the initiative. By contrast, Vichy relied on Nova Films, backed by the Propaganda Abteilung, to promote this cause in the 1943 film *Travailleurs de France en Allemagne*² and the 1944 film *Permissionnaires, n'oubliez pas*,³ both of which used footage obtained from the German occupied-world newsreel, *Die Deutsche Wochenschau*.⁴

² *Travailleurs de France en Allemagne* (Dir: Serge Griboff, 1943)

³ *Permissionnaires, n'oubliez pas* (Dir: François Mazeline, 1944)

⁴ See for example Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.43. This is also recorded in the catalogue entry for the two films at the Archives du Centre national de la cinématographie.

It is, then, important to ask why documentary films in 1943 continued to focus on apparently non-divisive, consensual themes, and on the continuity of life as before the Occupation.

What was it about the medium of documentary that enabled the directors and wider production teams of Vichy documentary film to continue this trend, at a time where other media was increasingly subject to Nazi demands? Were these directors coerced into maintaining this approach? Or, like those of the first two years of Vichy rule, were they keen to reflect themes and values which were already the subject of support? Did these directors support the regime? Or did they seek to challenge the Vichy, or German, authorities?

This chapter seeks to respond to these key questions and thus, in line with the research questions of the thesis, examines why these films are so different from other propaganda. Like those documentaries from the first two years of the Occupation, these films reflect the definition of propaganda set out in the introduction and in chapter one in that they present a largely idealised view of life under Pétain which is far from both the political reality of the time and indeed the audience's wider knowledge of political and military events. This chapter therefore illustrates this phenomenon in more detail and examines why these particular films ignore what the audience knew to be the political reality, especially given that this reality was often conveyed in other forms of propaganda, especially the radio and posters. The chapter therefore follows the same approach as chapter two, in probing the trajectories of the makers of these documentaries for explanations of the appearance of themes which had been the subject of support before the defeat, and indeed for the portrayal of events which had the potential to inspire the French people to look beyond the daily routines of the Occupation.

This chapter thus focusses on documentary film in 1943, the year after the occupation of the entire nation by the Germans, and in which the tide of the war turned irrevocably in the Allies' favour. The chapter examines how documentary films continued to promote a more moderate and more acceptable image of the Vichy regime than in other media, at a time when the Germans placed greater pressure on the Vichy authorities, especially with the

imposition of the STO and with the rationing of film,⁵ taking in *Le Culte des héros*, *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and *Les Chefs de demain*. The chapter asks why, when the Vichy leadership most needed support for its initiatives, especially the STO, Vichy documentaries consistently overlooked these policies and instead maintained the image of an autonomous France free from the constraints of the Occupation. Why did the directors of these films appear to do so little to increase popularity and uptake for the STO in 1943, despite the reports of the *Contrôles techniques* and the Prefects demonstrating the need for positive promotion of the scheme in the face of public disaffection? Indeed, such was the immediate unpopularity of the STO the *synthèse* of Prefect reports from February 1943 recorded that the initiative had ‘provoqué une agitation profonde des esprits.’⁶ The subsequent chapter then turns to the final year of the Occupation, 1944, and investigates why documentary film continued to promote a moderate image of daily life under Pétain, while also underlining French political autonomy, a matter of months before the Liberation.

This chapter therefore builds on the work conducted in chapter two, but also makes its own original contribution to the historiography of the Vichy regime. Firstly, the chapter undertakes the first substantive examination of the films *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, and *Le Culte des héros*. Secondly, this chapter adds to the existing work conducted on *Chefs de demain* by both Steve Wharton and Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, through locating the film within the context of this study on the moderate portrayal of daily life under Pétain in documentaries compared to other media, as opposed to within a context of an examination of the distinctiveness of the National Revolution in both Wharton and Bertin-Maghit’s studies. The emphasis with regards to *Chefs de demain* in this chapter is on the film’s projection of a strong future for France, alongside the continuities of everyday life from before the Occupation, that is to say the absence of exclusionary rhetoric, legislation or ideals, and an emphasis on themes which were the subject of support before the defeat. For

⁵ On the German restrictions to the amount of film permitted for French use, see Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.62

⁶ ‘Synthèse Des Rapports des Préfets de la Zone Libre pour le mois de février 1943,’ 18/03/1943, IHTP

Wharton, the documentary offers evidence of the value of service to Vichy, in which the cadres are preparing to shape Pétain's France for the future as part of a new, distinct, order. In Wharton's view, *Chefs de demain* emphasises that 'the system of the new order must be staffed by those knowing the true way,'⁷ while 'the film demonstrates that these civil service training schools succeed in training the leaders of tomorrow, dedicated to the service of the state in the knowledge that the values they are to defend include the self-sacrifice and teamwork [required] to succeed.'⁸ Bertin-Maghit, on the other hand, focuses on the role of unity between distinct social groups in the film, characterised by the mutual appreciation between the students of the school and the local *paysans* in a sequence in which the two groups help to protect the village from a storm: 'les jeunes unissent aussitôt leurs efforts à ceux des paysans et dans un même élan tous mettent le foin à l'abri.'⁹ Through its focus on the projection of a more moderate version of everyday life in Vichy documentary, in which there is an emphasis on continuity with life before the Occupation, and in which there is a failure to promote some exclusionary aspects to the National Revolution, and through examining the importance of the filmmakers' trajectories in shaping this work, the chapter makes an original contribution to the study of this material.

i. Maintaining and building on French strength in Vichy documentary of 1943

Whilst the end of 1942 had seen some major changes to the political context in France, with the occupation of the entire country by the Germans from November and the subsequent scuttling of the French fleet at Toulon, itself a response to the Allied invasion of French North Africa, the situation in 1943 was no less damaging for the autonomy desired by the Vichy authorities. Pétain's state was no longer in control of the Empire, an important aspect of the image of continuity stressed in earlier documentaries like *Fidélité* and *Dakar*. The loss of Algeria in particular, with its status as an integral part of France, was a damaging blow to the message of normality conveyed not only in Vichy documentaries but in a range of other

⁷ Steve Wharton, p.75

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.76

⁹ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.95

propaganda. The Empire was thus no longer a possible topic for filmmakers: not only had France lost control of the majority of its territories, but at the request of the *Propaganda Abteilung*, all documentaries on the subject of the Empire were banned from production and from screening.¹⁰ French documentary makers thus had to continue the trend initially developed in 1942 of a greater focus on domestic affairs. Here, too, though, there were challenges to any claims to Vichy autonomy, with an increasingly repressive and exclusionary political climate. Having been obliged to introduce the *Relève* to supply Germany with French labour in 1942, the French had also been engaged in a visible act of collaboration with the German occupiers in the *Rafles* which, despite the absence of anti-Semitic views in Vichy documentary and newsreel, did not pass unnoticed amongst the wider population. With Laval continuing to pursue the policy of collaboration at all costs, and having announced his wish for a German victory in June 1942, prompting reports of a ‘malaise’ amongst the French population in both zones,¹¹ support for the Vichy regime plummeted in 1943, after it had become apparent to the majority of the population that Vichy was serving the interests of the occupiers. The introduction of the STO in February confirmed the suspicion of the French public that collaboration was a one-way affair, while the *Service d’ordre légionnaire*, the paramilitary arm of the *Légion des anciens combattants* was converted into the *Milice* in early 1943, openly engaging French paramilitaries in the fight against French *résistants*.¹² The creation of the *Milice* thus offered further evidence of the regime’s willingness to serve the Germans at all costs; for Laborie, ‘la participation de ces [...] miliciens [...] à des actions contre la Résistance aux côtés des troupes d’occupation [...] finit de démontrer aux derniers hésitants la collusion indiscutable entre Vichy et les Allemands.’¹³ The Ministère de l’Intérieur’s *synthèse* of the Prefect reports from February 1943 duly noted that ‘le préfet de la Loire, dans son introduction au chapitre de l’Opinion Publique, souligne que les opérations de recensement des classes 1920, 1921 et 1922 ont

¹⁰ The SGI ordonnance read: ‘Les documentaires relatifs à l’Empire [...] seront interdits à partir du 1^{er} août 1943.’ See Note of 23/07/1943, AN F41 83

¹¹ Pierre Laborie, p.266

¹² See for example Robert O. Paxton, p.298

¹³ Pierre Laborie, p.285

indubitablement pris le pas sur toutes les préoccupations du public.¹⁴ The same report recorded of the *Milice* that ‘la majorité des préfets s'accorde à reconnaître que le mouvement milicien aura beaucoup à faire pour rencontrer la faveur de la masse qui voit dans la milice le prolongement.’¹⁵ By the close of 1943, ‘la Milice [est devenue] l’objet d’une haine sans partage.’¹⁶ This, then, was the climate faced by documentary makers of 1943. The fictitious claims of a united country in documentaries of the first two years of Occupation had been realised in November 1942, but not in the manner suggested, and Vichy was increasingly sucked into supplying the German war effort.

With the whole country now occupied, the bulk of the Empire lost to other powers and Laval intent on intensifying Vichy’s commitment to collaboration, documentary makers were also exposed to further challenges. The establishment of the *France-Actualités* newsreel moved the production team, including the Editor-in-Chief André Dercourt, along with some of the SGI management, away from the Côte d’Azur to Paris,¹⁷ with the headquarters of the newsreel now based in the rue François Ier.¹⁸ The presence of the Direction du Cinéma in the rue de Solférino was cemented by the arrival of additional personnel from Vichy.¹⁹ Marcel Pagnol himself refused to re-locate to Paris at the request of the Propaganda Abteilung, although his Marseille studios were bought and maintained by Gaumont.²⁰ Nevertheless, some production companies remained in Provence, including Latac productions, attached to the *Centre artistique et technique des jeunes du cinéma*, which later developed into the *Institut des hautes études cinématographiques*, which was based in Nice throughout the Occupation, where the company produced Clément’s *Chefs de demain*.²¹ Nevertheless, while

¹⁴ ‘Ministère de l’Intérieur: Cabinet du Secrétaire Général pour l’Administration, État français. Synthèse des rapports des Préfets de la Zone Libre pour le mois de février 1943,’ 18/03/1943, Institut d’histoire du temps présent, Centre national de la recherche scientifique

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ Pierre Laborie, p.285

¹⁷ See ‘Liste des personnes de la société appelées à travailler en zone occupée,’ 18/05/1942, AN F42 119

¹⁸ See for example the 1942 founding document signed by Henri Clerc, AN F42 119

¹⁹ See correspondence between Galey and Clerc, 17/11/1943, AN F42 119

²⁰ See Brett Bowles, ‘Accommodating Vichy: the Politics of Marcel Pagnol’s *La Fille du puisatier*,’ p.28

²¹ See Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, pp.27-28

Latac benefited from the supply of film from the Lumière business in Lyon, and was not subject to the quotas imposed on the SGI by the Propaganda Abteilung's *Filmprüfstelle*,²² other production companies were not so lucky. Restrictions on film, limiting the total length of the programme, including newsreel, documentary and feature film to just 3,300 metres from May 1942,²³ meant that documentary makers and their production companies, including Gaumont and Pathé, were increasingly reliant on the German authorities for the supply of film. While Clément benefited from the film provided by the Lumière laboratories in Lyon, and was thus comparatively free from German constraints, this was not the case for the directors of the other films examined in this chapter, namely Merlin, and to a greater extent Henri Clerc, who was subject to considerable German pressure in making *France-Actualités*. Yet this reliance on the German occupiers for the supply of film does not appear to have affected the approach of documentary makers in the final two years of the Occupation. Vichy filmmakers continued to pursue their own portrayal of daily life under the Occupation, away from the realities of the German control over the entire nation, despite the re-location of much film production to Paris and the forced working relationship between the SGI's leadership and their German counterparts, especially with the proximity between Galey and Heidrich von Weyrauch and Fritz Tietz, the representatives of *Die Deutsche Wochenschau*, on the Conseil d'Administration of *France-Actualités*.²⁴

Despite the repressive political context and the constraints of working in a France now entirely occupied by the Germans, documentary film in 1943 ignored overtly exclusionary and divisive themes in contrast to the increasingly collaborationist and discriminatory tone of other propaganda. As in the first two years of Vichy rule, this propaganda concentrated on promoting a vision of France which emphasised autonomy and offered some reassurance to the audience by evoking a time beyond violence directed against the Resistance and the imposition of obligatory labour in Germany, while also drawing on themes and ideals that

²² *Ibid*

²³ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.62

²⁴ See for example the minutes of the 'Assemblée générale annuelle en date du 17 juin 1943 de la société France-Actualités,' 17/06/1943, AN F42 119

had been popular before the Occupation. In the absence of the possibility of making films about the Empire, filmmakers were obliged to concentrate their efforts on the domestic context. Ignoring the STO and the *Milice*, the choice of topics for films in 1943 ranged from the preparation of future leaders in *Chefs de demain*, to the familiar theme of the importance of the family and of motherhood, in *Le Culte des héros*, to the non-paramilitary aspects of the *Légion française des anciens combattants* in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*. Beginning with the comforting assertion of the importance of motherhood, already the subject of popular support before the Occupation, through to the maintenance of French autonomy and quasi-military strength with the *Légion*, harnessing the pre-Vichy popularity of the *tricolore* and *Marseillaise*, and finally the reassuring image of the young elite continuing to serve the community at the Château de Charmages, these films thus appeared to set out to provide, especially for middle-class viewers, a comforting and reassuring image of life under Pétain.

ii. Supporting the strength of mothers to preserve France's future: Louis Merlin's *Le Culte des héros*

Mothers' Day represented the pinnacle of Vichy's family-orientated ideals. Formally re-introduced to the French nation in 1941, La Fête des mères offered the perfect opportunity to celebrate the contribution of mothers to French society.²⁵ Indeed, as Miranda Pollard notes, '[The process of exhortation and control was nowhere] more conspicuous than in the Fête des mères. French women were spoken of and spoken to not just in the familiar lexicon of natalist-familiasm but in a political language that newly constructed and privileged maternity and homemaking.'²⁶ To mark the occasion of the second official Mothers' Day celebrations under Pétain, the SGI commissioned Louis Merlin, the director of *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, to produce a commemorative film. Reflecting Pollard's assessment of the way in which Vichy sought to construct maternalism through la Fête des mères, *Le Culte des héros* is near-

²⁵ See for example Julian Jackson, p.331

²⁶ Miranda Pollard, p.45

mystical in its promotion of the cult of motherhood; the documentary utilises a dreamy female narrator to accompany scenes of maternal love, replicating the use of a female narrator in maternal scenes in Merlin's *Le Jardin sans fleurs*. Indeed, the credits of the film record the narrator's identity as Françoise Morphange, whose voice sounds very similar to the narrator in Merlin's earlier work. Like *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, the documentary also takes a semi-fictional approach, conveying the contribution of mothers to the French community in both staged and more 'realistic' settings. As with Merlin's 1942 film, then, the director captures the escapism of the cinema in the documentary, in which no political figures or policies are mentioned. Merlin conveys the overall necessity of motherhood and of the family throughout the film, which was probably distributed as part of a *France-Actualités* programme, given its availability through the Institut National de l'Audovisuel, the 'host' of existing *France-Actualités* reports.²⁷

The documentary is not only devoid of any mention of political figures, including Pétain, but it also ignores most aspects of the realities of everyday life under Vichy, in line with the approach taken in other documentaries, and instead concentrates solely on the figure of the mother, and making use of dramatic orchestral music to open the film, with soothing piano and stringed instruments to accompany the maternal imagery. The film draws explicit parallels between the figure of the mother and heroes, both ancient and modern and for example the opening scene, in which the film's title and credits appear on screen in Roman font, features a flame burning in honour of ancient heroes in front of classical ruins. A male narrator opens the voiceover, furthering this link between the strong figures of mythology and the modern-day mother, saying 'depuis l'antiquité, chaque peuple [...] rend hommage à ses héros.' The camera cuts to a parade in an unspecified location, in which a plinth, on which stands the figure of a woman, quite possibly Joan of Arc, is carried along by the tide of the crowd. If this is indeed Joan, the use of this symbol of French heroism would reflect Pollard's argument that the Fête des mères under Vichy emphasised duty and sacrifice;

²⁷ INA film number AFE86001920

‘these virtues marked motherhood, as they did the struggles of Vichy’s other great female icon, Joan of Arc.’²⁸ The camera does not dwell long on the procession, quickly cutting to a shot of a sea of wreaths and flowers, apparently at a monument. As the camera cuts from the procession to the memorial, the male narrator gravely records that ‘à tous ceux qui ont droit à leur cercueil, la foule vient et brille.’ In the next scene, a woman throws a bouquet of flowers onto a coffin, before the camera cuts to a shot of what appears to be a military graveyard, as the grave voice of the narrator emphasises the need to pay homage to the dead: ‘À tous ces héros, morts.’ Having established the importance of heroes to the nation and to the community, the film then jumps to the modern-day heroism of mothers.

Following the sombre imagery of the dead and of ancient customs, the next shot is altogether more light-hearted. The tone of the music becomes more upbeat and less mournful, with the gentle sound of the harp announcing the change in sequence. The camera cuts straight from the scenes of the graveyard to another bouquet of flowers, providing a symbolic link between the means of thanking departed heroes and their modern-day equivalent. Here, though, the flowers are to mark the happy familiarity of a family setting. A young girl is shown clutching the bouquet of flowers as Morphange narrates the girl’s thoughts, saying ‘moi, je vous demande une fois de l’eau une fois des fleurs [...] à toutes ces héroïnes vivantes.’ The young girl is shown lifting the bouquet aloft, presumably to offer it to her mother. Impeccably turned out in a neat dress, with well-combed hair and a happy smile, the presence of the girl seems designed to provoke the audience to think of their own children, offering an image of happiness and of the continuity of pre-Occupation standards of dress which betray the realities of the period. There is, indeed, nothing to suggest material hardship in the girl’s attire or her grooming. Having offered this first glimpse of a comforting image of an innocent-looking child, the camera then cuts to a shot of a mother and two children walking down the street, hand-in-hand. The female narrator draws further comparison between ancient, and presumably male, heroes, as demonstrated by the use of

²⁸ Miranda Pollard, p.48

the male narrator in the initial scenes, and these modern-day super-mothers, imploring the audience to take note of their contribution on a daily basis through a direct address, saying ‘vous les rencontrez chaque jour ces héroïnes!’

The camera then cuts to two mothers in a park, each sitting on a different bench and each gently rocking their offspring in their prams. The female narrator continues, ‘rien ne [...] distingue ces héroïnes des autres femmes.’ As one mother begins to knit, the camera cuts to a shot of another mother lifting her son in her arms. The narrator picks up the thread, saying ‘seulement, sur leurs visages, le même reflet de joie.’ The camera cuts again to a scene of two older children playing around a fountain, watched by their mothers, as the narrator adds ‘et toutes, elles portent le même nom: ce sont les mamans.’ In the next shot, the elder children come over to their mothers to admire their younger siblings who lie in their prams. The narrator continues her poetic voiceover, affirming that these mothers ‘peuvent être favorisées du sort.’ As the mothers carry their younger children down a street, and the camera singles out one smiling, doting mother, the narrator records that mothers ‘peuvent être épanouies comme une fleur le matin et avoir tout à venir.’



Figure 4: A young girl offers some flowers to her mother



Figure 5: A mother, whose face reflects the joy of motherhood, according to the narrator, carries her young son

The film then returns to its earlier mournful state with a shot of a widow, clad in black, visiting her husband’s grave. The narrator adds this woman’s strength of character to the traits of a mother, explaining that ‘elles peuvent avoir été brisées par la vie, avoir vu partir leurs enfants. Elles sont pourtant toutes seules.’ Yet as this widow makes her weary way back to her home, she is greeted by her daughter and granddaughter, demonstrating the

potential for maintaining this family's service to motherhood in the future. As mother embraces daughter from one generation to the next, the narrator explains again that 'ce sont les mamans. Et leur heroïsme est modeste, il est effacé, il est quotidien.' Again, there is an emphasis here on the daily contribution of these mothers to their children, their grandchildren and to the wider community. In the next shot, Merlin demonstrates the range of settings in which mothers contribute to the nation. A mother is shown walking along a field, guiding a horse which pulls a cart behind it. Unlike in Masson's 1942 *Nourrir la France*, where the absence of horses is projected as typical, in Merlin's film this mother is lucky enough to possess a horse to help her with work on the farm, in the absence of her husband. The narrator records that 'celle-ci, dont le mari est prisonnier, a maintenu la ferme.' This is the only, fleeting, reference to the realities of the absence of prisoners in the film. There is no suggestion that this mother, whose children are not actually shown in the scene, is struggling to cope without her husband, nor indeed that there is an absence of goods, including horses or foodstuffs in the film. The appearance of this wife of a Prisoner of War reflects Pollard's assessment that such women were deliberately thrust into the public spotlight as a way of 'nationalizing female fertility and regeneration,' thus establishing 'new hierarchies—of private virtue and duty and female self-sacrifice,' while also depoliticizing 'civil relations.'²⁹ The appearance of this wife of a prisoner, therefore, not only offered a virtuous image of a mother, reminding the public that the absence of Prisoners did not prevent the normal rhythm of rural life from continuing, but also served to reinforce this version of motherhood as the official version of womanhood. Beyond this brief acknowledgement, in fact, there are no further allusions to the realities of life under Occupation and indeed, this scene of the farmer-mother actually serves to highlight the strength of mothers and their contribution to the community. While reference to prisoners might have reminded some audience members rather too much of their real lives, the image of a happy, healthy mother working the land also appears to aim for a comforting portrayal of daily life, in which mothers continue to be able to provide for their families. Although this

²⁹ Miranda Pollard, p.48

was far from reality for many audience members in 1943, with rationing allowances decreased midway through 1942, the film offers a glimpse of the continuity of the availability of food from before the Occupation. In its depiction of a mother taking on the role of farmer, the film also combines the popularity of the maintenance of the traditional family unit with the continuity of the rhythms of rural life, offering reassurance that despite the absence of prisoners these traditions have not been abandoned.

Merlin replicates this emphasis on the achievements of mothers and the formula of ‘celle-ci a fait cela’ in the next shot, in which a mother is pictured hunched over a sewing machine. ‘Celle-ci travaille jour et nuit pour que ses petits deviennent des hommes.’ This mother again seems not to be affected by material shortages, and although she is repairing rather than replacing her children’s clothes, the camera reveals a plentiful supply of cloth. Only a tired expression as she feeds some material through the machine suggests that this mother is not infallible. In the next scene, a young mother is shown hanging some curtains, the material for which also appears to be readily available. The narrator, in her *Marseillaise* accent, records that ‘celle-ci bâtit, minute par minute, besoin par besoin, le bonheur de son foyer.’ The camera cuts then to a tender maternal scene, in which a mother strokes the head of her daughter who is lying comfortably in bed. The scene appears calculated to comfort the audience, with the mother looks adoringly at her child, who responds in kind. There is, in short, nothing remotely exclusionary or repressive about the image of a mother kissing her daughter goodnight.



Figure 6: A mother is shown working the land in her husband’s absence as a Prisoner of War



Figure 7: The tenderness of motherhood is emphasised as a mother kisses her child goodnight

The narrator continues this emphasis on the tenderness of motherhood by recording that ‘ces obscures et tendres héroïnes, ce sont les mamans,’ emphasising again the heroic nature of these mothers in their various settings, from the farmer’s wife to the sewer and from the curtain-maker to the mother saying goodnight to her child. The narrator then implores the audience to make their own contribution, saying ‘une fois par an, dites-leur merci.’ As a feminine hand turns back the page of a calendar to reveal the 30th of May, the narrator continues ‘le dimanche 30 mai, c’est la journée des mères.’ As the camera cuts to a mother being greeted by three boisterous children who race to greet her, armed with presents and cards, the narrator again addresses the audience directly, saying ‘à tous les enfants, préparez ce jour-là une surprise pour votre maman.’ While the mother kisses each of her three children and thanks them for their presents, the camera cuts to a scene of a grown man greeting his elderly mother. Again the narrator says to the audience ‘et si vous n’êtes plus un enfant, dites-lui merci quand même. Remerciez-lui pour tout ce qu’elle vous a donné.’ In the next scene, the shadow of a mother kissing her child on the head appears on screen as the narrator recalls again the heroism of these mothers, who are ‘les héroïnes de l’ombre quotidienne.’ The narrator continues ‘ce sont les créatrices du pays: ce sont les mamans.’ The family appear delighted to be together and are shown smiling and joking as the camera cuts to a poster publicising the Fête des mères. As the narrator’s final words fade out, the music that has been playing quietly throughout the images of mothers in different settings reaches a crescendo, and the identity of the film’s sponsor, the *Commissariat Général à la Famille*, appears on screen to close the film.

Le Culte des héros thus conveys the importance of motherhood in a remarkable number of settings. The film’s comparison between the heroes of the ancient world with the modern-day efforts of mothers, recorded in the title, is emphasised repeatedly to an extent that there is nothing subtle about the film’s message, namely that mothers are heroes. The only significant reference to mothers’ day comes at the very end of the film, when the narrator

highlights the forthcoming Fête des mères and when the advertisement for the event appears on screen. There are no further mentions of this festival; instead Merlin chooses to dedicate the majority of the film to a filmic glorification of motherhood, while also offering an example for children to follow in the scene which features the children offering presents to their mother. From the image of the mother kissing her daughter goodnight, to the scene in which the mother is shown ploughing the field with her horse, and the shots of the widow greeting her daughter and granddaughter, the documentary appears designed to offer reassurance to the audience across the entire French nation. In the same way that Merlin's earlier *Le Jardin sans fleurs* emphasised the importance of maintaining the traditional family unit, *Le Culte des héros* offers evidence to the viewing public of the continued strength of mothers under Pétain, the 'créatrices du pays,' according to the narrator. Despite the brief reference to the absence of prisoners, which is countered by the image of the mother maintaining the traditional routine of rural life and the suggestion that she is still able to feed herself, there is nothing in the film to remind audiences of the material and political realities of the Occupation. Again, this reflects Pollard's argument that the focus in Vichy's portrayal of women was the establishment of *new* hierarchies, namely of 'virtue and female self-sacrifice,'³⁰ in place of allowing women freedom to make their own choices; by returning to the traditional image of the mother that features in the film, Merlin was both reassuring audiences of the maintenance of the continuity of motherhood and of female fertility, while also offering up an image of women that was entirely one of self-sacrifice. Both the music and the choice of the narrator appear to have been calculated to offer reassurance and comfort to the viewer; the gentle harp and string music which plays in the background to the scenes of maternal tenderness appears designed to reflect the soft, tender love of a mother for their child, while the female narrator complements these scenes of maternal care. Whereas the initial scenes of ruins of the ancient world, where Merlin establishes the historic precedent of the hero, are voiced by the rather mournful male narrator, and remind the viewer of their own mortality through showing a memorial and a graveyard (though

³⁰ Miranda Pollard, p.48

interestingly not, apparently, a war memorial) the scenes of maternal pride are far more comforting. The suggestion here seems to be that while in the ancient world heroes may have been male, some of their efforts ultimately led to death, whereas the heroic actions of modern-day mothers, while more mundane and domestic, offer significant help to their families and to the wider community, as demonstrated in the scene of the farmer's wife.

In a film dedicated solely to the importance of the tender, loving mother, and the contribution of these 'heroines' to wider society, there is surprisingly little about the actual family-orientated policies of the Vichy regime. Like Merlin's earlier film, and like Vichy documentaries more widely, while the portrayal of the cult of motherhood in the documentary reflects the regime's defence of traditional family values, some familial legislation is overlooked. Just as *Le Jardin sans fleurs* ignored divisive familial policies like anti-abortion and anti-divorce measures, these are also overlooked in the film, at the expense of an overwhelming emphasis on the comforting image of maternal tenderness. Given the film's propagandist nature, of course, it is unsurprising that Merlin's portrayal of mothers, like that in *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, is sometimes deceptive. Yet it is interesting that more moderate measures are also ignored. The family scenes tend to show mothers with two to three children, yet there is no suggestion here of Vichy's financial incentives which applied to families of at least two children,³¹ which might have offered further reason for the audience to think about motherhood. The ignorance of this policy is especially surprising given that its presence would have complemented the emphasis on the importance of motherhood in the film, rather than detracting from the documentary's message. The film's portrayal of some mothers is also rather at odds with Vichy's support for fertile women capable of producing a large brood; the achievements of the mothers pictured with their two or three children are simply not on the same scale as the woman in Nantes glorified for producing no fewer than ten children.³² In the same way, some women who appear in the

³¹ See J.G. Shields, p.19

³² Robert Gildea, p.79

film, like the farmer's wife, the sewer and the curtain-maker, do not actually seem to have any children, which raises questions about whether or not they are mothers at all.

Yet the film appears to have been produced deliberately to emphasise the reassuring continuity of motherhood under Pétain. There might be no references to the Marshal, or to his government, nor indeed to even the more moderate, less divisive family-orientated policies of the Vichy regime, but the film nevertheless strives for an image of France in which mothers undertake a range of tasks to care for their families, who should reciprocate this love, according to the film, through offering gifts on Mothers' Day. From the use of gentle, soothing music, to the tender, female narrator, beyond the brief mention of the absence of Prisoners there is no suggestion that the audience is suffering material hardship; the woman sewing her children's clothes seems to have plenty of material, while the curtain-maker appears to have several options of curtain available. The farmer's wife, with her horse, also appears well-fed and seems not to be struggling to produce food. The absence of these everyday material hardships in the film complements the consistently gentle, comforting, and strong image of the mother, demonstrating that such traditional family roles continue as before the Occupation. The consistently favourable comparison between these women and the heroes of old also appears to be designed to suggest that France will continue to be able to produce new generations long into the future. Indeed, the mothers who appear in the film seem to be able to undertake a considerable range of tasks, and in the case of the farmer's wife, to provide for themselves, without much input from their husbands, suggesting that these mothers are to some extent independently-capable women. Only one man appears in the film, offering flowers to his elderly mother; mothers appear on their own in every other scene. In the absence of men, in fact, there appears to be no limits to what French mothers can achieve.

Merlin's film, with its emphasis on the continuity of motherhood, and of the capabilities of mothers, appears to contrast steeply with the political realities of Vichy France, even if its portrayal of women as mothers reflects Pollard's view that the regime deliberately used

Mothers' Day as a way of returning women to the home while also constructing the image of 'beign subject[s] for national celebration.'³³ Yet the film ignores other realities; released in the same year as the introduction of both the STO and the *Milice*, there is nothing in the film, beyond the single mention of the Prisoners, to suggest that life has changed since before the Occupation. The continuity of the importance of motherhood under Pétain in the film, thanks to the (re)introduction of Mothers' Day is thus far less repressive than the political reality. Other forms of contemporary propaganda, by contrast, were both more representative of Vichy's policies and more exclusionary. Whereas Radio-Vichy continued to permit Merlin to produce his *Alphabet de la famille* programme in 1943,³⁴ the station also maintained its anti-Semitic programmes developed in 1942 under Darquier de Pellepoix's leadership of the CGQJ. A memorandum issued in November 1943 by the 'Section d'enquête et de contrôle pour la zone sud' of the CGQJ, for example, noted that 'la propagande anti-juive n'est pas assez intense' and called for an increase in radio propaganda.³⁵ At the request of Darquier, an inquiry into the presence of Jewish personnel and a purge of any Jewish-composed music took place at Radio-Vichy in January 1943 to reduce perceived Jewish influence, albeit with little success and as a functionary at the CGQJ wrote to the Radiodiffusion nationale, 'l'enquête n'a abouti à aucun résultat.'³⁶ In common with other documentaries, there is no suggestion in Merlin's film that life under Vichy involves discrimination against Jews, developing an altogether more moderate and less exclusionary vision of Pétain's France. Yet while Merlin's radio programme stressed the same importance of the traditional family promoted in his films, it was nevertheless broadcast on the very radio station that was increasingly promoting anti-Semitism, and was thus accompanied by reminders of the realities of Vichy's exclusionary agenda. Merlin's films, by contrast, were viewed in a setting of escapism and distraction in the cinema,

³³ Miranda Pollard, p.49

³⁴ Olivier Barrot and Raymond Chirat, p.79

³⁵ CGQJ Internal memorandum, 01/11/1943, CDJC LXXXIX-110

³⁶ Memorandum from CGQJ to Radiodiffusion nationale, 11/01/1943 CDJC CIX-54

offering some further evidence of the importance of the context of Vichy documentaries in shaping their more moderate approach.

In the same way, the content and tone of contemporary posters also opens up further questions about the particular nature of the cinema in encouraging a more moderate portrayal of daily life under Pétain in documentary films. Posters, in fact, promoted both the STO and the *Milice* throughout 1943. One such poster featured the emblem of the *Milice*, a looped white cross, superimposed over the hammer and sickle, with the slogan ‘Contre le communisme, la Milice française. Secrétaire d’État: Joseph Darnand.’³⁷ This willingness to promote the paramilitary *Milice* in posters contrasted to the moderate portrayal of daily life under Vichy in Merlin’s film, with its familiar images of mothers undertaking everyday tasks and caring for their children, hailed throughout the film as the real heroes of France. The masculine, militaristic character of the *Milice*, promoted in this poster as champions of the nation against the threat of Communism, is far from the emphasis on the heroism of femininity in *Le Culte des héros*. Indeed, there appear to be no internal or external challenges to the version of everyday life that features in Merlin’s documentary, in contrast to the emphasis on the importance of fighting Communism in the poster. This distinction between masculine, militaristic heroism in the *Milice* poster and the feminine contribution to France, as mothers and indeed as farmers, sewers and curtain-makers, in *Le Culte des héros* suggests that the context of the cinema enabled Merlin to develop this altogether different version of daily life. Merlin’s film, with its semi-fictional approach, is essentially escapist, whereas the *Milice* poster appears to offer a more accurate representation of political reality. In the same way, a pro-STO poster of 1943³⁸ highlights this distinction between the context of the cinema, with its potential for distraction and for escapism, and posters. Whereas Merlin’s image of women in *Le Culte des héros* is of maternal pride and strength, and to

³⁷ See for example ‘Brochure présentant la politique de Laval,’ 1943, Archives départementales de l’Hérault, Cote ADH, 59 W 108

³⁸ See ‘Finis les mauvais jours!’ Produced by the Office de Répartition de l’Affichage, 1943. IWM PST 3323. The poster is reproduced in figure 8 with thanks to the Imperial War Museum’s Non-Commercial Licence, under the terms of which the image can also be found at: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/23587> (Accessed 16/07/2014 at 15.10)

some extent even female independence, since only one man appears in the film, offering flowers to his elderly mother, the STO poster emphasises the reliance of women on their husbands for provision as a means of inciting women to view the benefits of the STO. In the poster, a mother embraces her daughter in the foreground, while in the background the father waves happily from a workshop in Germany. The caption, which reads ‘Finis les mauvais jours! Papa gagne de l’argent en Allemagne!’ emphasises the heroism of Frenchmen, in the same way as the *Milice* poster, and contrasts with the apparent heroism of mothers in *Le Culte des héros*. While the term STO is not actually used, the mention of Germany in connection with supporting a family contrasts with the ignoring of the German presence, and other exclusionary measures, in Merlin’s work. Mothers in *Le Culte des héros* appear capable of providing for themselves and their children, with no hint that everyday life is ‘mauvais,’ while the suggestion in the poster is that the STO is the means to support a family and to lift the very real material hardships experienced by the French people. Through mentioning the opportunities offered by working in Germany and material hardships, while also reducing the role of the mother in favour of the father’s efforts, the poster is more representative of the realities of Vichy’s policies towards the family, with financial and professional rewards for fathers and of the everyday situation for people across France, than Merlin’s film. Like the *Milice* image, however, the poster could be ignored or overlooked by its intended audience, whereas *Le Culte des héros* was projected to a captive cinema audience who had a very real wish to be distracted from reality. If posters were thus more exclusionary and more realistic than Merlin’s work, they were also viewed in a very different context, in which the viewer was far less likely to seek escape from their everyday routine.



Figure 8: In contrast to the dexterity of mothers in a variety of settings in *Le Culte des héros*, this 1943 poster promoting the STO emphasises the reliance of women on their husbands for provision while also acknowledging material hardships ('les mauvais jours') and the realities of Vichy's politics. Reproduced under the Imperial War Museum's Non-Commercial Licence ©IWM

The ignoring of collaborationist policies and the wider exclusionary political climate of 1943 in the film is arguably less surprising than the ignoring of some of Vichy's more moderate pro-family legislation in *Le Culte des héros*, especially the *Allocations familiales* and the workplace incentives for fathers of large families, in favour of an exclusive focus on the capabilities of mothers. Whereas Merlin's earlier work also ignored exclusionary measures, it nevertheless included references to the potential benefits of large families. It is informative to ask, then, in line with the research questions of this thesis, why *Le Culte des héros* was so different and why it did not reflect the political realities of Vichy France in the same way as other forms of contemporary propaganda. What were Merlin's motivations in making a film which focussed on more moderate, less exclusionary themes than, for example, the makers of posters or radio propaganda? And had these motivations changed since Merlin's 1942 film? As with *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, the overall portrayal of Vichy in the film is positive and the emphasis on the comforting continuity of the tenderness of motherhood and the

reassuring images of mothers embracing their children suggests that the government is nurturing and protecting traditional families, a source of consistent popularity. The ignoring of contemporary exclusionary and repressive measures in the film, with its distraction from everyday hardships through focussing on the tenderness of mothers, may also have actually served the interests of the regime, rather than detracting from Vichy's popularity. Yet Merlin's emphasis on heroism, and on depicting strong female figures, combined with his ignorance of measures which were both moderate and largely based on Daladier's Family Code in the form of family allowances, suggests perhaps that he also had other motivations. The consistent message in the film is that French women are capable of great things, from farming the land in the absence of their husbands, to achievements in more domestic settings, and that they are 'heroines' of France. The future appears safe in the hands of these women, encouraged and thanked with the use of Mothers' Day and the absence of any checks on the likelihood of the continued strength of French mothers reinforces the suggestion that France will thrive in the future.

If Merlin's motivations were not necessarily to undermine the regime, given his overall positive portrayal of the regime's support for mothers, they might well have been to challenge the more exclusionary aspects of Vichy's politics. The strength of the mothers, and their portrayal as heroic, was likely to increase a sentiment amongst audiences that France was as strong as ever under Pétain, and well-prepared for a strong, productive future thanks to fertile and capable mothers. This portrayal of mothers might even have encouraged a sense of empowerment amongst mothers watching the film; if the single mother could work the land in the absence of her husband, then surely the average female viewer could also find some inner strength? While not championing a militarily strong France in the same way as other contemporary documentaries, there is nevertheless an undercurrent of patriotism in Merlin's film which appears to go against the reality of Vichy's views towards the role of women, although his film nevertheless places women firmly in the domestic sphere with little chance of autonomy, reflecting Francine Muel-Dreyfus's argument that

women under Vichy were essentially a ‘construct’. Indeed, ‘the state definition of feminine identity [was] subjugated to the family and the reproductive function.’³⁹ Although Merlin’s continued service of Vichy through his documentary work and through his long-running radio programme suggests that he was unlikely to seek to undermine the regime in his propaganda, there are nevertheless hints in *Le Culte des héros* of selective support for Vichy’s project. While above all meeting the audience’s perceptions of the cinema as a space for distraction, the categorical ignoring of the Germans, and the patriotic sentiments permeating the film, also raise questions about the possibility that, like Masson, Merlin shared some of the characteristics of a *Vichyssois-résistant*, consistently promoting the image of a strong France in which people, especially women, appear capable of fending for themselves and their families without external intervention.

iii. Continuing the military way? The loyalty of veterans in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*

Merlin’s *Le Culte des héros*, then, continued his earlier emphasis on the maintenance of family values under Vichy, promoting a vision of motherhood which was both tender and heroic, and emphasising the possibilities for the future of an autonomous France thanks to these capable and loving mothers. By contrast, a more militaristic, and more masculine, version of the maintenance of a strong, independent France came in the form of a documentary celebrating the third anniversary of the *Légion française des combattants*. The *Légion*, an amalgamation of the rival pre-war veterans’ associations, was intended to serve Pétain and his government through active promotion of the National Revolution. In an already competitive market of quasi-governmental ‘intermediary’ groups between government and the people, including the Amis du Maréchal of the *Amicales de France* and both Marion’s ‘Propaganda delegates’ and the *commissaires du pouvoir* from 1941,⁴⁰ the *légionnaires* took it upon themselves, in Paxton’s assessment, ‘to denounce pre-war leaders

³⁹ Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the eternal feminine: A contribution to a political sociology of gender*, trans. Kathleen A. Johnson (New York: Duke University Press, 2001) p.207

⁴⁰ See Julian Jackson, p.258

to the authorities, to forbid public appearances that displeased them and in general to act like a pseudo-government.⁴¹ The *Légion* attracted, according to Jean Guéhenno, local notables with scores to settle, describing his local Parisian branch president as ‘le pharmacien de l’endroit, qui se venge depuis deux ans de ne pas avoir exercé le reste de sa vie aucune influence.’⁴² Yet the *Légion* was also inextricably linked to the personality of Pétain and its purpose was, in the Marshal’s own words to ‘maintenir le pays dans l’ordre et la concorde.’⁴³ Pétain featured prominently at every celebration of the *Légion*’s anniversary, prompting on each occasion a speech which underlined his commitment to the movement. The Marshal’s speech of August 1941, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the *Légion*, for example, recorded his pride at ‘ceux qui sont aujourd’hui groupés autour de moi.’⁴⁴

If the *Légion* was renowned for petty rivalries with other organisations and for appealing to the whims of local notables, its connections to Pétain as *Chef* and its militaristic celebrations of its anniversary were reminders of France’s past military prowess, while also offering some encouragement for the future, not least for viewers who had supported measures aimed at ensuring a strong French nation before the Occupation. The documentary produced to commemorate the third anniversary of the *Légion*, in August 1943, reflected each of these characteristics. While the catalogue record for the film at the *Centre national de la cinématographie* notes that the film was distributed by the *Légion* itself,⁴⁵ it appears likely that the film also accompanied *France-Actualités* as a special edition in the week of the 3rd of September 1943.⁴⁶ It would seem likely, then, that the director of the film was Henri Clerc, Président and Director-General of the newsreel. Like *Le Culte des héros*, the film utilises every second of its running time to champion the role of the *Légion* in maintaining French military traditions. In the same way that Merlin used music to promote the

⁴¹ Robert O. Paxton, p.190

⁴² Jean Guéhenno, p.283

⁴³ Philippe Pétain, ‘Message du 31 août 1941,’ in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, p.181

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ CNC catalogue record for *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion française des combattants et des volontaires de la Révolution nationale*, consulted August 2013

⁴⁶ Record of the running order of the 3rd September 1943 edition, No.35, of *France-Actualités* in AN F42 119

tenderness, and multiple capabilities, of mothers, Clerc drew on triumphal militaristic music to accompany scenes of *légionnaires* on parade, while also, unlike Merlin in *Le Culte des héros*, making much of the *tricolore* to develop the film's patriotic message.

The documentary opens with a French military scene. Marching alongside two officers, one in naval uniform and another in army beige, Pétain appears on screen, lighting the *Légion's* flame of remembrance. To a triumphant musical accompaniment, the male narrator, probably Jacques Breteuil, the 'Chef de reportage' of the newsreel⁴⁷ and former narrator of *FAPG*, proudly announces Pétain's lighting of the flame: 'À Vichy, Monsieur le Maréchal Pétain va allumer la flamme de souvenir ce matin de la troisième anniversaire de la Légion française des combattants.' The choice of male narrator reinforces the fact that the ceremony is a predominantly male affair, in contrast to the tenderness of the female narrator in the domestic settings of *Le Culte des héros*. As Pétain marches, bolt upright, to light the flame, he is met by three rather stern-looking *légionnaires* resplendent in their berets, who promptly take the ceremonial torch from the Marshal. The flame is surrounded on all sides by other *légionnaires* who carry *tricolores* and the *Légion's* own flag, with a distinctive cross. Breteuil emphasises that these scenes of militaristic might are not confined to Vichy; indeed 'dans toutes les villes et les villages de la zone sud, les légionnaires sont rassemblés.' The camera then cuts to Pétain marching to take his place at a raised platform, inspecting and saluting the massed ranks of *légionnaires*, with their berets, *tricolores* and *Légion* flags proudly on show. One young man ensures that the cameraman keeps his distance as the Marshal marches down the lines of *légionnaires*. As Pétain arrives at the stage, the camera cuts back to the flag-bearers, who are surrounded by fellow *légionnaires* and indeed some civilians; a family made up of a father, a mother and two children are shown watching proceedings from a distance. This shot of a family appears to suggest that, thanks to the efforts of Pétain and his representatives in the *Légion*, the traditional family has not only

⁴⁷ See 'Liste des personnes de la Société appelées à travailler en zone occupée,' 18/05/1942, AN F42 119

been maintained but can also take pride in the militaristic strength of France on this grand occasion. There is also a clear distinction between the civilian dress of the mother and her children and the military uniforms sported by most of the men present, albeit not the husband, emphasising the continuity of traditional gender roles under Pétain. Whereas Merlin also promoted these roles, the hints of female capabilities and even independence in *Le Culte des héros* is altogether absent from this family scene, with the mother and her children in particular clearly in some awe at the presence of the Marshal and indeed the gathered *légionnaires*.



Figure 9: Pétain salutes the assembled *légionnaires* as he marches to take his place on the stage. The berets of the *légionnaires* and the flag of the *Légion* accompany the *tricolore*.



Figure 10: A family watches proceedings from a distance. There is a clear contrast in the film between the spectator position of women and the military roles played by the men.

The camera then cuts back to Pétain taking his position on the stage, flanked by a bodyguard of *légionnaires* of varying ages. As the Marshal begins his speech, which was also broadcast on Radio-Vichy,⁴⁸ the camera pans out to reveal a further line of *légionnaires* standing guard in front of the stage. The camera crew, probably comprised of René Brut and Georges Ansel, who were Pétain's official cameramen,⁴⁹ appear to have been blocked from obtaining a close-up shot of the speech, since the camera angle of the discourse is poor, obscured by the

⁴⁸ Jean-Claude Barbas, Preface to Philippe Pétain, 'Message du 29 août 1943,' in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, p.313

⁴⁹ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.193

front row of bodyguards. Whether this was to hide the Marshal's frailties or because of the intervention of the *Légion* is unclear; Pétain does not appear particularly frail in the speech sequence, although this wide angle shot does allow the camera to pick out the vast numbers of fellow officers and *légionnaires* sitting alongside the Marshal on the stage. While not enabling an especially clear view of Pétain, Brut and Ansel's work does, then, emphasise the military strength of the occasion. Indeed, given that the camera angles in shots of the Marshal inspecting the parade are much clearer in quality and more close-up than the shots of the speech, it is unlikely that Brut and Ansel attempted to alter the representation of Pétain in the film. Like the gathered crowd, who greet the Marshal with a mixture of rapturous applause and reverence as demonstrated in the traditional family unit watching in awe, Brut and Ansel, who also spent more time with Pétain than many French people, would probably have shared Pierre Laborie's assessment that in 1943, despite a collective dwindling interest in the actions of the Marshal, 'la fidélité affective aux composantes qui forment la base de la représentation originelle du maréchalisme reste toujours sensible.'⁵⁰ Certainly, the response to the Marshal's speech is hugely appreciative; there are chants of 'Vive Pétain' as the discourse draws to a close. The content of Pétain's speech is an ode to the actions of the *Légion*, while also hinting at the difficulties faced by France, so astutely ignored in Merlin's film. The version of the speech which appears in the film, like that in *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*, is only an extract of the radio transcript held in the archives of the BDIC,⁵¹ and in fact contains none of the most pessimistic lines of the full discourse.

Despite an acknowledgement of 'une situation dont le danger s'aggrave sans cesse' in the extract of the speech that features in the documentary, and of 'les innocentes victimes des bombardements aveugles et injustes,' the film does not include the suggestion that France ought to meditate on 'les causes de notre malheur pour éviter le retour à des formules dont

⁵⁰ Pierre Laborie, p.289

⁵¹ See 'Discours aux Légionnaires,' 29/08/1943, BDIC MPAUD02901

vous savez bien [...] conduiraient la France à sa ruine définitive.’⁵² Instead, the version of the speech in the film cuts to a later line, which encourages obedience and unity, and which records that ‘ensemble, nous sauverons la France.’ While there is, then, a suggestion that there are threats to Vichy’s existence in the wider context, including Allied bombing and a single reference to ‘des actions terroristes,’ the speech which appears in Clerc’s documentary avoids the suggestion of ‘unhappiness’ and the potential for France to be ‘ruined.’ The edit of the discourse also fails to include Pétain’s later line that notes ‘des difficultés [...] inévitables’ faced by the French population and the *Légion* in particular, while focussing instead on the possibilities of saving France for the future. This failure to reflect references to difficulties and ‘malheur’ faced by the French in Clerc’s edit of Pétain’s speech offers further evidence of the capacity for documentary film to offer an alternative, and more moderate, version of life under Pétain than was the case in other media, since the radio version of this discourse included these rather more pessimistic acknowledgements of material hardships. Although there is a hint at the presence of the Allies, and a veiled allusion to the acts of the *Maquis*, there are no references to the German occupiers here. Instead, Pétain insists that the French, with the help of the *Légion*, can save themselves, and along with the images of military strength in the form of the hundreds of *légionnaires* and other military personnel, this seems to suggest that France is very much a thriving, independent, autonomous nation, capable of dealing with any external pressures.

Following the Marshal’s speech, the camera cuts first to the family featured before the stage sequence, who are now shown waving their handkerchiefs in appreciation and shouting ‘Vive le Maréchal.’ The camera then cuts again to Pétain striding down the lines of *légionnaires*, resplendent in his uniform and followed by the gathered dignitaries from the platform. As the men march behind Pétain, the camera picks out the Marshal’s stick, providing some further evidence that Brut and Ansel did not deliberately set out to overlook Pétain’s frailty in the speech scene. Pétain salutes the gathered *légionnaires* as he passes,

⁵² See Philippe Pétain, ‘Discours du 29 août 1943,’ in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, p.313

before reaching his designated spot to witness the parade of the *délégués* of the *Légion* from across the ‘Southern’ Zone. According to Breteuil, these are the representatives ‘de ces douze millions d’hommes, invités de suivre la personne [...] et la doctrine de Monsieur le Maréchal.’ The camera then cuts to the parade itself, in which hundreds of these chosen men file past Pétain, complete with their berets and medals. The parade, along with Breteuil’s emphasis on the sheer number of *légionnaires* across the Southern Zone, appears deliberately intended to highlight the scale of loyalty shown by veterans to Pétain, and indeed the past military strength of the nation. Combined with the images of the military officers which accompany the Marshal on taking the salute, the scene also demonstrates current French military prowess. The militaristic music which heralds the parade also contributes to the sense of pride surrounding the celebrations, and appears intended to swell the patriotic sentiments of the viewer, confronted with such scenes commemorating past French glories and the on-going contribution of veterans to the nation. As Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, in his single reference to the film, suggests, ‘la présence des soldats avec les légionnaires aux cérémonies de flamme’ emphasises ‘l’héroïsme des hommes lors de la dernière guerre.’⁵³

Having emphasised the scale of the *Légion*’s support for Pétain and his government, and demonstrated the pride and ‘heroism’ of these veterans, the camera cuts to an altogether different setting, in Marseille. Here is a visible reinforcement of existing French military strength; gathered in a city-centre square, are thousands of *légionnaires* who are there to celebrate the anniversary along with serving military personnel. As the *tricolore* flies in the centre of the square, Breteuil proudly announces, to a background accompaniment of triumphal military music, that ‘à Marseille, en présence de M. Lemoine, préfet régional, le flambeau allumé à Vichy arrive à La Porte d’Aix.’ The camera cuts from a wide-angled shot of the square to focus in on the arrival of a group of athletes, reminiscent of the Olympic torch relay of 1936, depicted in contemporary German film footage and taken up around the

⁵³ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.108

world,⁵⁴ arrive at the square to hand over the flame to a naval officer, who then lights the ceremonial flame, surrounded by a guard of honour of serving soldiers. A *légionnaire* proudly holds a *tricolore* as the flame is lit. As the military music increases in volume, the camera cuts from this scene of *légionnaires* and white French military personnel to a group of colonial troops, who stand proudly to attention. The camera picks out soldiers from a range of backgrounds, from the initial shot of troops from sub-Saharan Africa to a group from Indochina, before then cutting to the view of proceedings from a vantage point above the square.

The scale of the French military ceremony is again made explicit here and hundreds of soldiers seem to be packed into the square, standing alongside former servicemen. Still accompanied by the sound of military music, the camera cuts again to a shot of a narrow alleyway, as the colonial soldiers now march towards, as Breteuil informs the audience, ‘le monument aux morts d’orient.’ Here, perched on a hill, these colonial troops lay wreathes in memory of the fallen, in a scene which replicates the emphasis on the sacrifice for the nation undertaken by troops in Algeria and Senegal in Naintré’s 1941 *Fidélité*, except here in honour of the contribution made by troops from south-east Asia. As the men line up in front of the monument, the camera cuts between close-ups of their faces, as if to underline the diversity of the origins of the army, and of wider shots of the monument, above which hang several *tricolores*. A further ceremonial flame is lit at the base of the memorial by a white French army officer while the music continues to provide a dramatic, militaristic score to the event. The camera then cuts back to the centre of Marseille, where a soldier representing each broad area is lined up to receive the flame to commemorate the efforts and service of their people. Breteuil, pride soaring again in his voice, records that ‘les flambeaux sont allumés; Afrique, Madagascar, Orient.’ As these flames are lit, the men march from the square through the city to the sea, as Breteuil notes that ‘émouvant symbole; les trois soldats représentant la procession lointaine ont jetté la flamme de souvenir dans les eaux.’ The men,

⁵⁴ See for example British Pathé’s coverage of the Olympic flame relay: ‘Olympic Flame Starts its Journey to Berlin,’ British Pathé newsreel, 1936, Film number: 201206.014

accompanied by fellow soldiers, look rather uncomfortable as they hurl their torches into the sea, surrounded by white French officers. As the camera takes in the large audience gathered to watch this symbolic gesture, intended to reach the shores of these territories, the camera cuts to archival footage of the Empire. From a scene of North Africa, to sub-Saharan Africa, possibly Senegal, and then to an island, probably Madagascar, the film seeks to highlight the clear link between the efforts of these colonial troops and the past glories of the French Empire. Breteuil, this time in a sombre tone, records that ‘les pensées de tous se tournent envers l’Empire, où la terre a été cruellement arrachée. Vers ces Français au-delà des mers, séparés aujourd’hui de la métropole, mais qui participent à la cérémonie de l’unité impériale et à qui la Légion entière demande cette journée d’anniversaire de garder la fierté autour de la France.’ As the music reaches a crescendo, the camera cuts back to the sun setting on the memorial, as the colonial and white French troops, surrounded by *légionnaires*, stand in tribute to the fallen of the Empire, before the picture slowly fades out.



Figure 11: Soldiers from across the Empire pay homage to fallen World War I comrades



Figure 12: Soldiers from Africa, Madagascar and south-east Asia receive a torch from an officer

This second part of *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, which takes place in and around Marseille, builds on the scenes of past French military glory established at the parade in Vichy, while also offering evidence of contemporary French control. The diversity of the soldiers present at the event in Provence demonstrates to the audience the vast expanse of the Empire, while Breteuil emphasises that these men come from three very distinct, and geographically broad, locations. As at Vichy, there are hundreds of *légionnaires* supported

by soldiers from metropolitan France and from the Empire, demonstrating the significant resources available to serve Pétain. In Marseille, more than at Vichy, there are more serving soldiers than veterans, suggesting again that France remains a strong and autonomous nation under Pétain. If the Marshal mentioned some threats to the status quo in his speech, in the form of Allied bombardment and ‘terrorist’ activities, these are entirely absent, as indeed, are other checks on French autonomy, in the scenes in Marseille.

The *Légion*, and the unarmed soldiers from the mainland and overseas, appear able to carry out their ceremonies without any challenge from internal or indeed external factors. In Marseille there is simply no suggestion that the whole of France is occupied by the Germans, nor indeed that France does not, in fact, possess an official army. The Armistice Army was dissolved on 27th of November 1942,⁵⁵ yet the film quite clearly shows military men in full uniform parading around the streets of Marseille and Vichy. Even if these men appear unarmed, they are nevertheless obviously military, and certainly in Vichy, also naval, personnel. In the same way, beyond a single reference by the narrator to the loss of some territories, ‘cruellement arrachés,’ the suggestion in the film is that France still controls, if not physically then theoretically, the Empire. The sheer number of troops from Africa, Madagascar and from south-east Asia, along with the archival shots of a diversity of locations across the world, appears to hint at the maintenance of French control of some overseas territories. Breteuil’s line that these commemorations of the *Légion*’s third anniversary are taking place across the Empire suggests that Vichy still exercises sufficient authority overseas to ensure that its own ceremonies continue, in spite of the loss of some colonies. The archival shots of the Empire record past glories while also seeming to suggest that the Empire will be reunited soon, thanks to the intervention of the *Légion* and Pétain. Were the audience not to pay careful attention to Breteuil’s very brief note that some of these territories have been ‘snatched,’ the viewer would simply be confronted with the same images of French control overseas as in films from 1940 and 1941, notably *Dakar*, *Fidélité*

⁵⁵ See Christian Bachelier, ‘La nouvelle armée française,’ in Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (Eds.), *La France des années noires* 2, *op. cit.*, p.255

and *Méditerranée/Niger*. Yet the reality was rather different; by August 1943 there was little left of the French Empire, now placed firmly under the control of either the Allies or the Axis. Although in North Africa Vichy's laws remained intact,⁵⁶ this was certainly not the case for other regions mentioned in Breteuil's summary of the origins of the colonial troops; in Madagascar and Syria, for example, the Vichy administration had been entirely replaced by a new Gaullist regime.⁵⁷ It would seem very unlikely that as late as August 1943 commemorations of the *Légion*'s anniversary were taking place in either Madagascar or indeed in the Middle-East. Yet the film consistently plays up French autonomy and appears intended to heighten French patriotism with its scenes of massed ranks of soldiers and *légionnaires*, accompanied in the scenes at both Vichy and in Marseille by the symbol of French national pride in the form of the *tricolore*, and the soundtrack of proud, militaristic music which reaches its crescendo in the final sequence, paying homage to the victims of World War I from the Empire.

This emphasis on apparent autonomy, and the suggestion that France still exercises some control over the Empire, is all the more surprising in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* given the banning of films related to the Empire in July 1943, only a month before the commemorations of the anniversary in August, and two months before the film's release in September. How, then, was Clerc able to include references to the Empire and to suggest that Vichy maintained some control overseas in the face of this Propaganda Abteilung-imposed ban? There is, in fact, as in other documentaries discussed in this thesis, very little in Clerc's film to suggest that politics and indeed life more generally have changed since before the Occupation, while there are also remarkable similarities between the second part of *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and films in both 1940 and 1941, with the same emphasis on the Empire and on military strength as in *Dakar, Méditerranée/Niger* and *Fidélité*. Given that the film is ostensibly solely related to a celebration of the *Légion*, Clerc might have been able to persuade the *Conseil d'Administration* of *France-Actualités*, and in

⁵⁶ Robert O. Paxton, p.283

⁵⁷ Colin Smith, p.355

particular the German representative Heidrich von Weyrauch, that the documentary would do nothing to challenge the German presence in France. Since Clerc had gained a reputation for dealing directly with von Weyrauch and bypassing the full *Conseil*, and for attempting to create more discreet propaganda by the end of 1943,⁵⁸ was he therefore able to ensure the film's release after the banning of documentaries about the Empire because of his own personal connections and power of persuasion? It seems likely that Clerc made concessions to the demands of the German occupiers at the same time as releasing the documentary for the newsreel which accompanied the documentary included reports on subjects which reflected the collaborationist reality of Vichy's project in 1943.⁵⁹ Indeed, the opening report of the edition featured the activities of the *Légion des Volontaires français contre le bolchévisme* (LVF), the collaborationist unit which fought alongside German troops on the eastern front,⁶⁰ while another brought news from the same front. These reports contrast with the images of past and present French military prowess and the hints at the continuity of French control over the Empire in Clerc's stand-alone documentary. Did Clerc, then, seize the opportunity offered by documentary film to present a different version of life under Pétain? While *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* was released alongside *France-Actualités*, it belongs firmly to the genre of documentary film, with its reputation in Steve Wharton's assessment, of serving 'educational' purposes.⁶¹ Its screening directly before the feature film in most cases, in the face of an order by the 'Filmsprüfstelle' section of the Propaganda-Abteilung requesting that documentaries be shown *before* the newsreel,⁶² also meant that Clerc's film was shown in the context of the cinema of escapism and distraction, rather than the more 'factual' context of newsreel. This different setting for the documentary may, then, explain in part the emphasis on French autonomy and independent strength, as

⁵⁸ See Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.56

⁵⁹ See running order of *France-Actualités*, No.35, 03/09/1943, AN F42 119

⁶⁰ On the LVF, see for example J.G. Shields, 'Charlemagne's Crusaders: French Collaboration in Arms, 1941-1945,' *French Cultural Studies*, 18, 1, 2007, 83-105

⁶¹ Steve Wharton, p.205

⁶² On the discussions between French and German authorities about the running order of cinema screenings, see correspondence between André Collinc, administrator at *France-Actualités* and Roland Lapeyronnie, Galey's replacement at the head of the cinema section of the SGI, 28/04/1944, AN F42 119

well as the maintenance of the Empire in the film after Vichy's autonomy had largely been eroded.

Unlike posters and the radio, and even to some extent Clerc's own newsreel reports, which did promote some of the divisive and exclusionary aspects of Vichy's political project, *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* thus simply did not reflect the genuine experiences of French people in 1943. In line with the central research questions of this thesis, it is, then, important to ask why this was the case. What were Clerc's motivations in emphasising French strength and emphasising the continuity of the Empire at a time when the Empire had been largely lost? Why was Clerc's film also so removed from the political realities of life under Vichy? Clerc, like his predecessor as Director-General of Vichy's newsreel, Philippe Este, was also reflecting the values and themes with which the audience across France identified. Chief amongst these themes was, of course, the maintenance of the Empire, in spite of the loss of colonies, which developed the collective French pride in the colonial system. The unease of the three soldiers chosen to throw their torches into the sea is palpable, and their role is very much a symbolic one in the film; the other colonial troops appear solely as a manifestation of the diversity of the French Empire and appear in support roles. It is the white French officers who light the flame in the centre of Marseille and at the memorial to the fallen, not the descendants of the colonial troops who made the ultimate sacrifice for France. This secondary, symbolic role for the colonial soldiers follows the same techniques used in the earlier films on the Empire, reinforcing the idea that the French colonial model continues to thrive under Vichy. The patriotism inherent in the film, with the massed ranks of *legionnaires* and soldiers, and the presence of the *tricolore*, reflected collective French pride from before the Occupation, and also complemented the wider support for a strong colonial France. By contrast, the promotion of the personality of Pétain in the film also reflected the support for the Marshal as a figure of legend in 1943.⁶³

⁶³ Pierre Laborie, p.288

As in earlier films, there is, in fact, nothing exclusionary or divisive in the documentary, and nothing to hint at the intensification of collaboration that took place in February 1943 with the introduction of the STO. Did Clerc, then, not support exclusionary measures? While he had previously voiced support for collaboration, Clerc was frequently involved in power struggles with von Weyrauch and the Propaganda Abteilung in his wish to create propaganda that was less 'Germanic' in tone than von Weyrauch demanded.⁶⁴ It seems unlikely that Clerc would have sought to undermine the regime, and his continued focus on Pétain throughout the existence of *France-Actualités* suggests that he may well have shared the fondness for the Marshal expressed by the wider French population. Above all, Clerc seems to have been driven by a wish to make effective propaganda. In correspondence to the German authorities, Clerc argued the need to make films about topics with which the viewer could identify: 'Si le spectateur n'est pas intéressé par le film il pensera à autre chose pendant que les vues se dérouleront et l'effet de propagande cherché ne sera pas obtenu.'⁶⁵ *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* certainly does involve themes which would 'interest' the viewer. Clerc was also determined to ensure that his newsreel and accompanying documentaries would present the audience with 'un «vrai» film'⁶⁶; again, the ignoring of checks on French autonomy at home and abroad ensure that *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* shares the escapism of feature film. Indeed, the repeated emphasis on French pride, and the absence of the German occupiers, offers an image of France as a strong, autonomous nation. Yet despite this suggestion of a thriving nation, it would seem unlikely that Clerc wished to increase resistance against the Germans, even if he was constantly involved in arguments over content with von Weyrauch. Clerc's decision to cover the efforts of the LVF and to promote collaboration in the newsreel hint at pro-German convictions and perhaps the images of military strength are designed to protect France against the Allied threat, the 'bombardements' signalled in Pétain's speech. Nevertheless, the film certainly challenges the presumption that France lacks political power or military strength, and its ignoring of

⁶⁴ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.56

⁶⁵ Correspondence between Clerc and von Weyrauch, 08/04/1943, AN CJ 32 84

⁶⁶ See correspondence between Clerc and Galey, 06/03/1943, AN F42 119

collaboration in all forms arguably sought to remind the Propaganda Abteilung and the wider German authorities of the capabilities of France. Indeed, the role of *France-Actualités* in producing a moderate documentary with an emphasis on patriotism thus aligned the newsreel with the themes of Empire and military strength which feature in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, and therefore offered a possibility for Clerc to increase the public popularity for *France-Actualités* following audience dissent during earlier editions.⁶⁷ By the end of 1943, it seems that Clerc had in fact succeeded in engaging audiences throughout the country, boosting the financial health of the newsreel.⁶⁸

Yet if Clerc's motivations were possibly in the commercial interests of the newsreel, possibly driven by the need to make convincing propaganda, and partly to support, rather than undermine the regime, the documentary emphasises above all that the future of France is safe. The suggestions of French power and autonomy and the absence of connections with Germany, suggest that this future will be independent of the influence of any external power, with no suggestion that France is any more likely to align itself with 'terrorist' activities undertaken by the Resistance and the bombardment of the Allies than it is to support Germany. Despite the later activities of the cameramen Brut and Ansel in delaying images of the German war effort, and despite Clerc's later resignation following von Weyrauch's refusal to incorporate more reports about France in the newsreel, this documentary appears above all to focus on France's potential for the future than to challenge either Vichy or the invisible, absent, Germans.

iv. Reassurance in service to the community: preparing France for the future in *Chefs de demain*

Merlin and Clerc's focus on the strength of France under Vichy was taken up again by the youthful René Clément in *Chefs de demain*. Unlike either Clerc or Merlin, Clément appears not to have served the SGI before the release of his documentary, and did not possess the

⁶⁷ See correspondence between Clerc and Galey, 23/10/1942, AN F42 119

⁶⁸ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.55

same ties to the Vichy authorities as his contemporary directors. Where Clerc served the regime as director of *France-Actualités* and Merlin was called on repeatedly to make radio and film propaganda, Clément seems to have been a junior filmmaker whose involvement with the *Centre artistique et technique des jeunes du cinéma* (CATJC) prompted him to produce a tribute to the Vichy leadership finishing school system. There were nevertheless similarities between Clément and his more experienced colleagues; while Merlin employed a semi-fictional approach in his 1942 work *Le Jardin sans fleurs* and drew parallels with the traditions of the ancient world in *Le Culte des héros*, Clément combined fiction with fact in his own documentary, even making use of professional actors⁶⁹ and staging a fictitious event at the very real Château de Charmages. Like Merlin, Clément sought to promote the efforts of the Vichy leadership school in his film, while also demonstrating the strength and physical prowess of the French people.

Unlike Merlin and Clerc's 1943 work, *Chefs de demain* has no connection with *France-Actualités*, and its use of professional actors and fictionalisation of events did not adhere to the same sharp, and apparently factual, format espoused in particular by *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*. The film's lack of association with *France-Actualités* also makes the process of tracing the funding and commissioning of *Chefs de demain* more complex. It would seem likely that Clément received funding from the CATJC, financed through box office receipts since its inception in 1941.⁷⁰ CATJC was certainly involved in the financing of other films under the Occupation, including *Marine française* in 1942, which turned into something of a financial disaster for the association, making a loss of some 85,000 francs.⁷¹ Such was the scale of CATJC's financial mismanagement of this production that the SGI was obliged to fund the majority of the total cost of the film at 593,954 francs and retained ownership of the film. Despite this earlier crisis, CATJC nevertheless produced *Chefs de*

⁶⁹ The names of the nine professional actors appear in the film's credits, and included Jean Durand, who later moved to the USA where he forged a career as an extra in horror films, including *The House on Skull Mountain* (Dir: Ronald Honthaner, 1974)

⁷⁰ Steve Wharton, p.15

⁷¹ Note from M. Thuillier, SGI accountant, to the Direction Général de l'Administration of the SGI, 06/10/1942, AN F41 92

demain, which seems, according to the CNC, to have been commissioned by the SGI, and might therefore have followed the dual SGI-CATJC funding model of *Marine française*.⁷² In any case, *Chefs de demain* appears to have been Clément's first work for the SGI, followed in 1944 by a documentary on railway workers, *Ceux du rail*, complemented in 1946 by his pro-Resistance depiction of the *cheminots*, *La Bataille du Rail*. Like Jean Masson, Clément was not a professional propagandist, and his lack of political connections to the regime appears to have allowed him the flexibility to make film in his own style, hence the fictional approach to *Chefs de demain*. Nevertheless, like each of his fellow documentary makers, Clément did nothing in *Chefs de demain* to undermine the regime, while also maintaining an image of life under Vichy which was moderate and reassuring. *Chefs de demain* thus ignores the exclusionary aspects of the political reality in 1943, especially the introduction of the STO and the role of the *Milice*, in favour of an altogether more inclusive version of everyday life in the Puy de Dôme.

The film opens with a group of young male French *cadres*, from a diverse range of trades and backgrounds, arriving at the Château de Carmages to begin their leadership training. To dramatic militaristic music, the male narrator assures the audience of the veracity of these scenes, which are 'images vraies, images sincères de la vie des jeunes dans les écoles de cadres.' From this initial line, the documentary immediately deceives the audience, as far from 'images vraies' the events which unfold in *Chefs de demain* are fictitious, played by professional actors. Unlike Merlin in *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, who does not claim explicitly that the actors playing the apparently unhappy, single-child family are the genuine article, Clément immediately emphasises the veracity of his own film, suggesting to the audience that the documentary film conforms to the public perception of the genre as 'educational.' This early claim of 'sincerity' and veracity by the narrator suggests Clément's desire to convince the audience that the inclusive, moderate images that follow are a truthful representation of life under Pétain. Through failing to acknowledge the presence of

⁷² This is also recorded by Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.250

professional actors in his film, Clément thus sought to pass off *Chefs de demain* as a genuine, ‘truthful’ documentary film, rather than a fictional portrayal of events at a real location. The explicit suggestion from the very start of the film, then, is that while the audience across France might be experiencing increasing material hardships and witnessing an intensification of collaboration with both the STO and the *Milice*, the French elite continues to thrive in the particular context of Charmages, just as it did before the Occupation.

The film maintains this apparently factual focus as it follows the progress of these young leaders through their time at the École de Charmages. In the next scene, the young men are shown joking and smiling with one another; indeed, in Steve Wharton’s assessment, ‘some of them show willing to “muck in”, while others appear more self-centred.’⁷³ Perhaps unsurprisingly for professional actors, the young men seem entirely confident in their leadership abilities, and delighted to have arrived at Charmages. For the male narrator, ‘ces jeunes d’origines professionnelles différentes vont découvrir les bienfaits de la vie collective et de la nature.’ This process of discovery is emphasised in the narrator’s insistence that these students’ work will take them through ‘[une] métamorphose profonde qui s’opère au cours de ces stages.’ In the next scene, the young men enter the first stage of their ‘metamorphosis’, attending individual meetings with the Principal of the school. Pétain’s face looms over proceedings from behind the Principal’s desk, thus reflecting the technique developed in other documentaries, especially those from 1940-1942, of relying on the popularity of the Marshal to suggest the importance of the activities at Charmages. Through directly linking the actions of the Principal with the personality of Pétain, Clément was drawing on the continued public perception of the Marshal as a ‘noble vieillard’ in 1943⁷⁴ and assuring the audience that the events at Charmages were a true reflection of life under Vichy. As the Principal informs one young man of the necessity of ‘l’esprit d’équipe’ at the school, the camera again links the actions of the students with the personality of Pétain, as

⁷³ Steve Wharton, p.74

⁷⁴ Pierre Laborie, p.288

though to highlight the importance of the work at Charmages to the French community under the Marshal. While the camera cuts between the portrait of Pétain, the stern figure of the Principal and the earnest *cadre*, the Principal, taking up the role of the narrator, emphasises that at Charmages the young men will learn ‘des leçons d’histoire pour rendre à notre pays les notions de l’ordre et de discipline.’ The insistence on order and on discipline also draws on the personality of Pétain, reflecting the emphasis on discipline in the Marshal’s 11th of July 1940 speech, in which he recorded that ‘nous ferons une France organisée où la discipline des subordonnés répondra à l’autorité du chef.’⁷⁵ Here, again, the dialogue provided for the character of the Principal by Clément appears designed to suggest that, thanks to the intervention and support of the Marshal, these young men are receiving the training required to ensure that France remains a strong nation in the hands of capable leaders. Combined with the portrait of Pétain behind the Principal’s desk, the catchwords of ‘order’ and ‘discipline,’ hallmarks of the Marshal’s rhetoric around the National Revolution, also seem intended to encourage the audience to identify with and support these young representatives of the French elite whose efforts will ensure that France maintains her status as a powerful nation.

Following the Principal’s interviews of each student, the camera then cuts to the young men undertaking their training in the school’s classrooms, intent on proving themselves. As the narrator notes ‘la vie quotidienne d’une équipe se partage entre les cours théoriques, les activités sportives et les travaux manuels en plein air.’ The camera cuts then to the young men preparing a stage in the countryside surrounding the school. As one final team-building exercise, the students must, according to the narrator, ‘organiser un petit spectacle pour les habitants du village.’ Having built the stage and rehearsed, the young men begin to perform their comic play to a small audience of the elderly. However, as the dramatic music intensifies, storm clouds are shown hovering overhead. The camera cuts to an elderly man pointing urgently to the fields surrounding the school. The narrator announces dramatically

⁷⁵ Philippe Pétain, ‘Message du 11 juillet 1940,’ in Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, p.68

that ‘c’est aux jeunes hommes de Charmages d’aider les habitants du village.’ The students dutifully abandon their play, while the camera cuts again to a scene of agricultural labour reminiscent of *Nourrir la France*, as the young men help to bring in the last crops of the harvest. As the rain begins to fall, the thankful villagers return with the Charmages intake to gratefully watch their play. As Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit records in his brief analysis of the film, ‘grâce à [l’efficacité des étudiants] et à leur compétence, mises au service de tous, la récolte est sauvée et les élèves ont gagné l’estime du village.’⁷⁶ As in Jean Masson’s 1942 film, Clément demonstrates the continuity of traditional French farming methods in the agricultural scene, in which these young men are shown undertaking the bulk of the labour, harvesting the crops by hand, while the women and elderly people carry out largely domestic tasks. The efforts of the Charmages students thus demonstrate not only the physical prowess of these young French men, and their commitment to maintaining French rural traditions, but also their leadership potential. In a village which appears to have been deserted by men of labouring age and inhabited only by women, children and the elderly, the young members of the French élite step in to contribute to this microcosm of French society. Clément’s message is simple: these young men are serving their elders, while also providing for women and children, offering a reassuring image of continuity of the same rhythms and routines of rural life espoused by Masson in *Nourrir la France* and Este in *Jeunes de France*.

The absence of men in the village is, crucially, never explained. Unlike the reference to the absence of Prisoners in *Le Culte des héros*, and in *Nourrir la France*, the audience is invited to make its own assumptions about the reasons for this absence. Given that the village of Charmages is a genuine location, it is entirely possible that the population had been depleted because of the absence of Prisoners, although in any case the narrator’s insistence on the veracity of all the events featured in the film blurs the line between fiction and reality. It is in keeping with Clément’s film that the very real absence of Prisoners, along with other hardships experienced under the Occupation in 1943, is entirely ignored. There is, indeed, no

⁷⁶ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.95

suggestion whatsoever in the film that Pétain's regime is pursuing the collaborationist initiative of the STO, nor indeed actively engaging in the fight against the Resistance through the creation of the *Milice*; instead Pétain's state appears as one in which the Marshal inspires acts of benevolence and indeed heroism from young trainee leaders. It might well have been that Clément wished to heighten the physical prowess of the Charmages students by presenting the village as suffering from an absence of working-age men; for Bertin-Maghit, '*Chefs de demain* prend bien soin de présenter un village dont la population est principalement constituée de femmes, d'enfants et d'hommes âgés.'⁷⁷ The absence of men certainly enables the professional actors playing Charmages students to demonstrate their strength, and provides them with the opportunity to serve the local community.

Uniquely for a Vichy documentary film, the role of the narrator is reduced in the scene in which the young men assist the community, with the dramatic musical score providing the soundtrack to the scenes of hasty agricultural labour. Whereas in other documentaries, including both 1943 films *Le Culte des héros* and *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, the narrator's commentary is constant, in *Chefs de demain*, Clément heightens the drama of the harvest scene by relying on music. It is only when the play recommences after the men have completed their labour ahead of the impending storm that the narrator once again takes up the commentary: 'Les habitants du village rendent hommage à ces jeunes hommes, chefs de demain, qui ont montré leur esprit de solidarité.' The camera then cuts from a close-up of the women and elderly men in the audience to a classroom, where the young men are gathered. Having now completed their training, each man is asked by the Principal whether they are ready to serve France and its youth, to which the resounding answer is 'oui,' before then taking an oath to 'servir la France jusqu'à la mort.' As dramatic orchestral music swells to a crescendo, the camera fades out on the image of one young man standing proudly before his colleagues, having sworn an oath of allegiance to his country.

⁷⁷ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.95

Clément's film is closer in style to Merlin's *Le Jardin sans fleurs* and *Le Culte des héros* than it is to any other Vichy documentary film. Unlike Merlin, however, Clément makes a point of emphasising that the film qualifies as a documentary, emphasising the apparent veracity of its content; Merlin never explicitly records that the protagonists that appear in either of his films are 'ordinary' French people. The content of *Chefs de demain*, especially the harvesting scene, is closer to a feature film than to a documentary and the heavy reliance on musical accompaniment, the downplaying of the role of narrator and the use of professional actors all heighten the drama of the film. In other ways, however, the film maintains the trappings of other Vichy documentary films; the presence of the very real figure of Pétain shows that the young men attending the school at Charmages are contributing to France under the Marshal, while there are also no references to the exclusionary realities of the Vichy regime in 1943, nor indeed to material hardships. The messages of the film are also essentially the same as earlier Vichy documentaries; the contribution of young men to the continuity of French agricultural traditions and their service to the community through assisting the elderly and female inhabitants of the village is reminiscent of the content of Este's *Jeunes de France*. The positioning of women and the elderly in secondary, largely domestic settings, requiring the help of the bright young Charmages students, likewise draws on the same approach as earlier Vichy documentaries, notably the wine harvesting scene in *Jeunes de France*, but also the scenes of agricultural labour in *Nourrir la France*. The women in *Chefs de demain* might not appear quite as multi-talented as those in Merlin's *Le Culte des héros*, but they are also positioned in domestic settings. As with earlier Vichy documentaries, there is nothing exclusionary or reactionary about the positioning of women in such domestic roles; indeed, one contemporary British documentary, *The Way to His Heart*,⁷⁸ emphasised the importance of women cooking hearty and nutritious meals using potatoes for their husbands. The message in the final sequence underlines the loyalty and service of these young men to Pétain and to France, demonstrating that they will use their physical and mental prowess to serve the

⁷⁸ *The Way to His Heart* (Dir: Donald Taylor, 1942) IWM NMV 706A

nation. These men might be actors playing the role of bright young *cadres*, but through pledging their loyalty to France ‘jusqu’à la mort,’ Clément demonstrates the willingness amongst French youth to ensure the ongoing strength of the nation. The title of the film, repeated in the course of the film by the narrator, coupled with this promise of lifelong service to France, emphasises that the future of France is safe, under the careful watch of the Marshal’s portrait and his representative in the form of the Principal.

Clément’s film, then, while adopting some of the aspects of feature film, especially through the use of professional actors and the fictional storyline, nevertheless claims to offer a true reflection of life under Pétain, in which the French élite is trained to maintain the traditions of French life through undertaking archaic agricultural practices and working together as a team to support the local community, and indeed the wider nation. The absence of references to contemporary collaborationist and exclusionary measures, and indeed the effects of Prisoners of War on French communities like the village of Charmages, along with the narrator’s insistence of the veracity of the images at the start of the film, all contribute to demonstrate the continuity of French strength and independence. These young men appear to be training to become leaders of a strong France devoid of any checks on its power; for the audience across France the film appeared to offer a reassuring glimpse of life continuing in some ways as it did before the Occupation, with the ongoing rhythms of rural life, and demonstrating the commitment of Pétain’s government to ensure the future strength of France through creating this provision for young, talented French men. Indeed, the promotion of Charmages in the film offers evidence, in Steve Wharton’s assessment that ‘the system of the new order must be staffed by those knowing the true way.’⁷⁹ While Clément’s film does offer reassurance that a new generation will be developed through the work at Charmages, with these young men able and willing to support the local community and prepared to serve France for the remainder of their lives, there is no explicit mention that

⁷⁹ Steve Wharton, p.75

this represents a 'new' order. Rather, the suggestion is that the school is simply maintaining the ongoing existence of the French elite.

Above all, *Chefs de demain* offers a highly positive portrayal of life under Vichy, in which bright young men demonstrate their willingness to serve the nation and to work together to support the French community. Clément's choice to either ignore or to overlook the possible reasons for the absence of men from the local village, and to ignore other potentially divisive issues in the film, especially material hardships in the form of increased rationing, presents a version of life which had the potential to offer reassurance to the audience, while also, in the same way as Masson's *Nourrir la France*, to provoke some negative reactions amongst French people suffering from restrictions in food. The young men that appear in the film are members of an elite, chosen to benefit from the training at Charmages. While they do support the local community through their harvesting, the opportunity to gain extra training from the teachers and Principal at Charmages was one which few audience members would have enjoyed in 1943, at a time of increasing demands on the French public, especially with the introduction of the STO. That these young men appear to be protected from the requirements of the STO likewise offers reassurance that some talented Frenchmen can continue to make a contribution within France, while also potentially raising questions about the opportunities available to the French elite but not to the general public. Unlike Masson, however, Clément's emphasis on service to the community suggests that the intention behind the images of these happy, hardworking and loyal young men is not to undermine Pétain's regime but to promote the efforts of Pétain's government.

The absence of the German occupiers and the repeated emphasis on the future suggest that France will continue to thrive and to be led by strong, capable leaders in the future.

Clément's film does not play up the military strength of France, unlike *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, but there is nevertheless a suggestion of physical strength amongst the *cadres* at Charmages. Clément's film foregrounds themes which were already the subject of popular support before the Occupation, and indeed remained so in 1943. The

promotion of a strong nation which was inherent in the support for a powerful colonial France before and during the Occupation, and the use of the personality of Pétain simply reflected the continued popularity of these themes. The suggestion that Charmages was both supported by and dedicated to serving Pétain drew on the public sentiment of the Marshal as a ‘legendary’ personality. In this sense, Clément was doing little more than any of his fellow documentary makers in promoting popular themes. Yet the continued promotion of a strong future for France in the hands of the physically and intellectually powerful students of Charmages, and under the overall tutelage of Pétain, also hints at the same currents of *Vichyssois résistance* present in other films. Clément’s decision to use professional actors to heighten the drama of the film, and thus to emphasise the heroism of the protagonists, alongside his utilisation of the cult of Pétain, suggests that Clément was supportive of the Marshal. Nevertheless, the film ignores German strength while aiming to play up French pride; combined with Clément’s later involvement in portraying the actions of the Resistance in *La Bataille du Rail*,⁸⁰ and his apparent absence of views on collaboration, *Chefs de demain* might have been calculated to increase support for a strong, and ultimately independent, France. Although the film eschews the focus on French military achievements prevalent in other documentaries, the scenes of strong, shrewd young Frenchmen working together to defeat adversity, in the form of the incoming storm, and to serve the nation ‘until death’ seem designed to stir patriotic sentiment.

Given that Clément’s film thus promoted the vision of a strong, autonomous France, pulling together as a team, it is informative to examine why, beyond the deception inherent in all propaganda, *Chefs de demain* ignores the exclusionary and collaborationist messages promoted in other forms of contemporary propaganda. Why did Clément choose to make a documentary which simply did not allude to either the political realities or the material hardships of the time? Although Clément was not a regular SGI propagandist, his trajectory

⁸⁰ On *La Bataille du Rail*, see for example: Martin O’Shaughnessy, ‘*La Bataille du rail: Unconventional Form, Conventional Image?*’, in Nancy Wood & Rod Kedward (Eds), *The Liberation of France: Image and Event* (Oxford: Berg, 1995) pp.15-27

was more associated with filmmaking than Clerc's, who was a former Radical deputy for the Haute-Savoie.⁸¹ Like Merlin, Clément was thus a 'true' filmmaker, and lacked the political convictions as the director of Vichy's newsreel. Clément seems, then, to have been motivated by the opportunity simply to make films, more than to take on any political agenda. To this extent, Clément reflected the audience's desire for escapism from everyday realities within the cinema, presenting a version of life under Pétain which was, essentially, fictional. Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit even goes as far as to describe *Chefs de demain* as a 'film de fiction,'⁸² which highlights the extent to which the documentary could be considered as a distraction from reality. It was perhaps this desire to maintain the escapist traditions of the cinema, and to meet the demands of audiences keen to experience distraction from their lives, that motivated Clément to make a film which determinedly ignores the exclusionary realities of life under Vichy.

Nevertheless, the release of the film in the context of 1943 also raises questions about the motivations of Clément's superiors at the SGI. Charmages, and the other Vichy leadership schools, were essentially Pétainist constructions, steeped in the spirit of the earlier years of the National Revolution; in November 1942, the majority of the teachers and students at the school at Uriage had in fact joined the Resistance in disgust at the German occupation of the whole country.⁸³ That Clément was able to release the film in 1943, the year after the principal Vichy leadership school had been disbanded, and its members joined the fight against the regime's collaborators, suggests that senior figures in the SGI did not share the same pro-German views as the Vichy hierarchy. Despite the introduction of the STO and the creation of the *Milice* to support the fight against the Resistance, both of which were promoted in other forms of propaganda, those at the top of the Direction Générale du Cinéma, especially Galey (who combined in 1943 the dual functions of head of the cinema

⁸¹ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, '« Les voyages du maréchal » : trois historiens en quête d'images,' in *Vingtième siècle: revue d'histoire*, Vol.32, No. 32, 1991, p.87

⁸² Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.95

⁸³ Robert O. Paxton, p.165

section and head of COIC)⁸⁴ appear to have been sufficiently pro-Pétainist, and perhaps even sufficiently opposed to collaboration, to permit the release of a film which promoted the activities of one of Uriage's sister schools. The absence of much archival evidence regarding *Chefs de demain* renders the process of tracing the SGI's approval of the film problematic. Nevertheless, CATJC seems to have functioned as a form of training wing to the SGI, reflecting Vichy's commitment to youth. The *Institut des hautes études cinématographiques*, the organism with which CATJC was later merged in September 1943, was in fact the brainchild of Galey, along with the director Marcel L'Herbier.⁸⁵ It therefore seems likely that Galey, in his multiple roles, would have sanctioned the production and later release of *Chefs de demain*. Certainly, Galey appears to have enjoyed a degree of autonomy which placed him at the very top of the decision-making process regarding cinema propaganda. To offer one illuminating example of this control, when Philippe Este, the former director of *FAPG*, appears to have entered into a dispute with the *France-Actualités* team in October 1942, he originally appealed to Paul Marion to mediate; Marion's response was to defer to Galey's judgement.⁸⁶ Galey was thus trusted greatly by the Vichy leadership and was very much at the forefront of decisions regarding new releases. Given that Clément's film emphasised the possibilities for a strong and independent France in the future, it was thus probably thanks to Galey and his SGI colleagues that *Chefs de demain* was released on the big screen.

Galey's commitment to French cinema and to the promotion of French films across the country, which shaped his support for the *Association pour la Diffusion du Cinéma rural*,⁸⁷ brought him frequently into contact with filmmakers from all backgrounds, including the cinematographer of *La France en Marche*, Jacques Berr, who joined the Resistance in 1942.⁸⁸ In an article in *Ciné-Mondial* in November 1941, Galey had recorded the importance

⁸⁴ Steve Wharton, p.42

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

⁸⁶ See correspondence between Louis Métayer and Galey, 18/010/1942 and between Este and Galey, 18/12/1942, AN F42 119

⁸⁷ Galey's commitment to the organisation is recorded in correspondence between M. Paoletti, Inspector of Fiances and Galey, which noted that the Association's budget had been 80,000 francs per year. See 'Note pour Monsieur Galey,' 01/03/1944, AN F41 92

⁸⁸ Brett Bowles, 'Newsreels, Ideology...', p.449

of the cinema as a 'outil de propagande de la pensée française,'⁸⁹ emphasising the necessity of promoting specifically French-orientated ideals in film. Having been involved in a bitter dispute with the Propaganda Abteilung over the meagre amount of film permitted for promoting French productions in rural areas,⁹⁰ Galey also later came into conflict with Philippe Henriot over the imposition of further pro-German reports in *France-Actualités* and Henriot's permission to dedicate French resources to films promoting the SS.⁹¹ Galey's permission for Clément to produce *Chefs de demain*, with its references to the Pétainist leadership schools, and his longevity in the post of head of the SGI's cinema section, would, then, seem to suggest that Galey was a loyal servant of the Marshal.

Yet Galey's commissioning of *Chefs de demain* was the latest approval in a long line of documentaries, including *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and *Le Culte des héros*, that promoted a more moderate, less exclusionary, and altogether misleading (if also potentially comforting) vision of life under Pétain. Galey was in regular communication with Clerc, and appears to have been a good friend; correspondence between the two men began on an occasional basis in 1942 with the affectionate address of 'cher ami.'⁹² It is perhaps, then, reasonable to assume that *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* was approved by the Direction du Cinéma in part because of Galey's proximity to Clerc, and their strong working relationship. Yet if Galey, like many other French people, supported the Marshal, his actions in the course of his several film-related positions do not suggest, unlike Clerc, that this support extended to the policy of collaboration. Perhaps, then, Clément's film, like those of Merlin and Clerc, was able to promote a vision of a strong and autonomous France which was also fundamentally inclusive because Galey sympathised with this vision of France, away from the realities of collaboration. As a filmmaker, Galey would have been aware of the audience's desires to escape reality via the cinema screen and perhaps Galey believed that such films would be the best way of promoting French ways of life and traditions, while

⁸⁹ Louis-Émile Galey, 'Le cinéma français,' in *Ciné-Mondial*, No. 5, 14/11/1941

⁹⁰ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.38

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.56

⁹² See for example correspondence between Clerc and Galey, 02/06/1942, AN F42 119

at the same time catering to the audience's wishes. The heads of Vichy radio and poster production were allies of the senior Vichy leadership, with André Demaison, a Laval loyalist, occupying the directorship of Radio-Vichy from April 1942 until Henriot's appointment, and Paul Creyssel, also a Laval man, running much of the Vichy poster production machine, also arriving with Laval and departing in January 1944.⁹³ But Galey appears not to have enjoyed such political patronage or leanings. It is, then, perhaps this combination of Galey's commitment to the interests of French filmmaking and French traditions, his proximity to fellow filmmakers like Clerc, and his lack of connections to the collaborationists within the Vichy leadership that permitted Clément's film, with its portrayal of life under Pétain that simply did not reflect political and everyday realities, to be released. If, therefore, *Chefs de demain*, promoted the interests of the Vichy authorities, while also offering a version of France in which the future was devoid of any limits on national sovereignty, this was perhaps attribute to the convergence of Clément's lack of commitment to collaboration and his uncertain political trajectory, and to Galey's dedication to the interests of French filmmaking ahead of the promotion of collaborationist ideals.

v. Conclusions. Vichy documentary film in 1943: a strong France for the future?

In the year in which the Occupation placed increasing demands on Pétain's government and on the wider French public, following the introduction of the dual collaborationist measures of the STO and the *Milice*, Vichy documentary films of 1943 shared several characteristics. Merlin's *Le Culte des héros*, Clerc's *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and Clément's *Chefs de demain* each emphasised the strength of the French nation in a variety of settings. Whereas Merlin demonstrated the heroism and talents of mothers, and their service to France through their femininity and fertility, creating a new generation to ensure to the survival of the nation, Clerc emphasised French military prowess and the continuity of aspirations for the French colonial model at a time when the Empire was no longer under Vichy control, and Clément demonstrated the willingness of French youth to serve their

⁹³ See Philippe Amaury, pp.288-301

community and their country. Despite the films' differences in format and style, they each followed the same principal approach of overlooking political and material realities and presenting a version of life under Pétain in which France thrived as an independent country, free from external political interference. Although Clément made use of professional actors, Merlin undertook a semi-fictional approach and Clerc adopted a more direct newsreel style, the films' messages were remarkably similar, offering reassurance to audiences, especially to middle-class viewers supportive of measures aimed at maintaining French national standing before the Occupation, that France continued to thrive under Pétain, while also, conversely, demonstrating that the future of the nation was secure. With the apparent continuity of the French colonial model and military strength in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, the continuity of traditional family morals in *Le Culte des héros* and of the maintenance of French rural life and of service to the nation in *Chefs de demain*, the audience across the entire country could take some comfort in the protection of French traditions under the Marshal.

In 1943, however, the version of events portrayed in Vichy documentary film was more removed from reality than ever; the portrayals of colonial strength conveyed in *Troisième anniversaire* belied the loss of the Empire to the Axis powers and to the Allies, while the materials easily available for the talented mothers in *Le Culte des héros* ignored the everyday pressures of rationing. That the images of life under Pétain portrayed in 1943 were so obviously removed from the realities of collaborationist measures and from the repressive political climate with the creation of the *Milice*, underlines the commitment of filmmakers to offer reassurance to the audience that life continued, in some places at least, as it did before the Occupation. This decision on the part of Clerc, Merlin and Clément to ignore realities and to emphasise the continuity of French strength appears to have been motivated by a complex mixture of sentiments, and accepted by Galey out of his apparent dedication to the promotion of French ideals in documentaries.

At a time when posters and the radio promoted divisive and exclusionary themes, such as the STO and the *Milice*, documentary film still continued to promote moderate themes in place of divisive realities. The films of Merlin and Clément offer hints of the same *Vichyssois-résistance* outlook present in the work of Masson, and espoused by the creators of *La France en Marche*, especially Jacques Berr, the head cinematographer of the series. For Clément and Merlin, their ignoring of exclusionary measures seem to have been motivated by a willingness to reflect the audience's desire for escapism and willingness to forget the hardships experienced in day-to-day life in the cinema, as identified in particular by Eric Alary.⁹⁴ In Alary's assessment, audiences did not attend the cinema to be reminded of the misery of their daily lives, which might offer some explanation for Merlin's dramatic portrayal of French female heroism and Clément's fictitious coverage of life at Charmages. By contrast, this ignoring of reality and portrayal of a militarily strong France under Pétain in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, in which the French colonial model was maintained, and which religious and political divisions appear not to exist, seems to have been driven by Clerc's determination to make 'successful' propaganda through drawing on themes which were likely to interest the viewing public. In 1943, as in the earlier years of Occupation and Vichy rule, then, the documentary film offered a forum with which to make propaganda that continued to overlook reality, while also drawing on inclusive, popular themes ahead of potentially exclusive topics. This phenomenon coincided with the continued influence of Galey, with his relative autonomy at the head of the Direction du cinéma, his lack of attachment to the collaborationist figures in the Vichy hierarchy and his commitment to making appealing French films, in France's interests. While public support for the regime was plummeting, the makers of 1943 Vichy documentary films were able to offer a vision of France which ignored the realities of the present, underlined the continuity of French traditions from the past, and offered some hope for the future. As the subsequent chapter suggests, this trend was to continue into the final year of the Occupation. The portrayal of life under Pétain in the work of Clément and Merlin appeared to emphasise the strength of

⁹⁴ Eric Alary *et al*, p.250

the French nation and to harness patriotic sentiment, with hints at a challenge to the presence of the German occupiers while promoting the interests of the Vichy authorities, and the few documentaries produced in 1944 were to build on this approach, presenting a greater challenge to the occupying powers.

Chapter IV

Vive le Maréchal? Promoting French strength and asserting national autonomy in

Vichy documentary film of 1944

THE only official visit by Pétain to the French capital in the four years of Occupation was supposed to be a secret. Fearing reprisals, the Vichy authorities did not inform Parisians of the Marshal's trip to their city until he had already arrived.¹ Yet the concerns of Pétain's advisors proved unfounded, for just as the Marshal had been greeted by adoring, cheering fans in 1941, with his visit to Montluçon and Commentry, captured in the 1941 documentary *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*, Parisians flocked in their thousands to see their head of state. Met by an outpouring of popular support, the Marshal's speech on this occasion constituted a few brief words. The public response, however, was the same as it had been in May 1941; to cries of 'Vive Pétain' and 'Vive le Maréchal,' the Parisian crowd joined together in a rendition of the *Marseillaise*. Four months before the Liberation, Parisians responded to the presence of Pétain in the same way as their counterparts in a small town in the Unoccupied Zone three years earlier. As at Commentry and Montluçon, there were no traces of the German occupiers in the film footage of Pétain's visit to the capital, featured in the documentary film *Une Page d'histoire*. In Commentry and Montluçon the Germans were absent through the necessities of the Armistice Convention and the construction of the Demarcation Line, but in Paris, their absence was altogether more problematic.

Just as Henri Clerc, Louis Merlin and René Clément had emphasised French political and military autonomy at the expense of any focus on the German occupiers, and in an increasingly pro-collaboration context, the makers of Vichy documentary film in 1944 maintained this approach. The vision of Paris, and indeed France, under Vichy in *Une Page d'histoire* is one of ongoing French political autonomy, in which France is entirely self-

¹ See Michèle Cointet, p.263

governed. The images of Parisians greeting their head of state and performing the patriotic anthem of the *Marseillaise* create the impression that life continues as before the Occupation under Pétain, and also that France is an independent, strong nation. Not only are the German occupiers absent in the film, in fact, but such is the emphasis on French military prowess and on evoking patriotic sentiments that the film appears, at times, to challenge the German authorities.

This chapter, then, continues where chapter three concluded, with Vichy documentary film in 1944. Given the few examples of documentary film commissioned by the Vichy authorities in the final year of the Occupation, the chapter focuses on the moderate portrayal of everyday life in *Une Page d'Histoire*, offering the first substantive examination of this film. As in chapters two and three, this chapter seeks to examine why *Une Page d'Histoire* fails to acknowledge or promote the exclusionary realities of the Occupation and of Vichy rule and in particular, in 1944, the violent repression of the Resistance, which featured in other forms of propaganda, and especially on the radio and in posters. Through examining *Une Page d'histoire*, the chapter therefore asks why Vichy documentary makers chose to continue to emphasise the strength of the entire nation under Pétain, rather than to promote exclusionary ideals and measures. The chapter investigates whether this portrayal of autonomy, alongside the emphasis on continuity of standards of life from before the Occupation, was driven by the motivations of its director, most probably Henri Clerc's successor as Director of *France-Actualités*, Maurice Touzé, and if so, whether these motivations were intended to prepare the audience for life after the end of the German presence in France.

i. Maintaining moderation in a collaborationist context: Vichy documentary film in the final months of Occupation

As the Occupation entered its final year, the autonomy and popularity of Pétain's government reached their lowest ebb. The Marshal himself remained the subject of respect

amongst the majority of the population, as the *synthèse* of the Prefect reports from February 1944 duly recorded: ‘La haute figure du Maréchal Pétain demeure à l’abri des critiques.’² However, Pétain was decreasingly revered amongst those living in the tightly-policed ‘Forbidden Zone’ of the Nord-pas-de-Calais,³ while the public view of the regime was, as recorded by the same *synthèse* of Prefect reports, characterised by ‘un très net sentiment de nervosité et d’inquiétude,’ with the middle-classes, the main audience of Vichy’s films in urban areas, considered to be ‘plus inquiète que jamais.’⁴ Meanwhile, the population continued to detest the STO, or as the *synthèse* put it, ‘l’hostilité au S.T.O. demeure intacte.’⁵ The actions of the Resistance and the likelihood of an invasion prompted a sense of fear and anxiety amongst the French which complemented the mass ‘aversion des Allemands.’⁶ It is a measure of how far public support for the Vichy government, if not for the Marshal, had fallen by 1944 that the majority of the French were prepared simply to wait for the Liberation; Pétain’s government was increasingly seen as ‘moribond,’ offering no likely future.⁷ Despite this public sentiment, the regime’s leadership tried desperately to cling to power and to life and the arrival of Philippe Henriot, formally replacing Paul Marion in January 1944 as Secrétaire d’État à l’Information et à la Propagande was intended to rekindle support for the government.⁸ Henriot’s appointment, which was demanded by Abetz and by Carl Oberg, SS Commander in France,⁹ prompted a series of subsequent changes at the top of the SGI. The arrival of Henriot was greeted by a mixed public reception according to the *synthèse* of the Prefect reports for February 1944 and while his appointment was welcomed ‘avec des commentaires souvent favorables,’ the frequency of

² ‘Synthèse des Rapports mensuels des Préfets (Zone nord et Zone sud),’ 15/02/1943, IHTP

³ Pierre Laborie, p.288

⁴ ‘Synthèse des Rapports mensuels des Préfets (Zone nord et Zone sud),’ 15/02/1943, IHTP

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ Pierre Laborie, p.290

⁷ *Ibid*, p.313

⁸ See for example Kay Chadwick, p.15.

⁹ See Philippe Amaury, pp.272–277

Henriot's speeches was viewed by the Prefect of the Vaucluse as likely to 'lasser un peu vite le public.'¹⁰

Louis-Émile Galey, who headed both the cinema section of the SGI and COIC from 1943,¹¹ and was probably the man responsible for the approval of the likes of *Chefs de demain* and *Le Culte des héros*, was replaced by Roland Lapeyronnie in May 1944, shortly before the Liberation, and after the release of *Page d'histoire*.¹² Galey's eventual departure meant that his dedication to French filmmaking and his promotion of French 'ideals' came to an end; having enjoyed relative autonomy when compared to his radio and poster colleagues, Galey was no longer in a position to support his fellow filmmakers. Unlike Galey, in fact, Lapeyronnie was a supporter of both Laval and collaboration, which enabled Henriot, before his assassination by the Resistance, to force through an increasing number of pro-German newsreel items. At the same time, Galey's colleague Jean Coupan gave way as Secrétaire-général of *France-Actualités* to Henri Pleven,¹³ before Clerc then resigned as head of the newsreel to be replaced by Maurice Touzé in March 1944.¹⁴ These changes at the head of the SGI and in the leadership of *France-Actualités* were, for Kay Chadwick, 'a last act of Vichy rooted in intolerance, violence and repression.'¹⁵ As the *Milice* stepped up its activities against the Maquis, especially in the massacre of *résistants* at the Glières plateau,¹⁶ Henriot set about purging other sections of the SGI, installing former *Miliciens* as functionaries in the radio and poster sections and thus ensuring that both media increased their already fierce

¹⁰ 'Synthèse des Rapports mensuels des Préfets (Zone nord et Zone sud),' 15/02/1943, IHTP

¹¹ See Steve Wharton, p.42

¹² Galey was still signing paperwork as late as April 1944, including an instruction to all cinemas to provide the normal fees for newsreels during power cuts. See 'Tarif de location des actualités,' 06/04/1944, AN F42 119. His name disappears from official correspondence from May.

¹³ The full list of replacements appears in the minutes of a meeting of the *France-Actualités* conseil d'administration which took place shortly before the Liberation. See 'Compte rendu de la conférence du 10 août 1944, tenu au siège de la société *France-Actualités*,' 10/08/1944, AN F42 119.

¹⁴ Formal notification of Clerc's resignation was provided by Henriot in correspondence to the 'Actionnaires de la société *France-Actualités*,' 25/04/1944 AN F42 119 and by M. Louis Batardon, Commissaire aux Comptes, in May 1944. See 'Rapport du Commissaire aux Comptes,' 31/05/1944, AN F42 119

¹⁵ Kay Chadwick, p.15

¹⁶ See Matthew Cobb, *The Resistance: The French Fight Against the Nazis* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2010) p.239

promotion of collaboration.¹⁷ At the same time, Henriot dutifully accepted all demands from the Filmprüfstelle regarding the content of *France-Actualités*, prompting negative reactions from audiences that had begun to appreciate Clerc's previous focus on French issues.¹⁸ All the while, the daily hardships of the Occupation continued, the *synthèse* of the Prefect reports for February noting that, 'les doléances du public continuent à s'amplifier au sujet des difficultés rencontrées dans l'approvisionnement en produits laitiers et matières grasses.'¹⁹

For all of these changes in the leadership of the SGI, the intensification of the fight against the Resistance and the continued preoccupation with the scarcity of daily commodities amongst the French public, Vichy documentary films of 1944 continued to draw on the same techniques and espoused the same messages as earlier films. Despite the arrival of highly collaborationist, fascistic personnel in key positions in the Vichy propaganda ministry, and the replacement of Galey, the biggest supporter of French-focussed documentaries, the last months of the Occupation saw the release of films which maintained the vision of a strong, independent France promoted in documentaries from each previous year. Whereas other media, especially Radio-Vichy,²⁰ reflected the changes introduced under Henriot, documentary film continued as it had before, even after the appointment of the collaborationist Lapeyronnie as Galey's replacement. The political and material realities of the months preceding Liberation were thus overlooked in favour of a focus on themes which had been the subject of support before the Occupation, and which remained popular under Vichy, even at a time when the population was considered to be more worried than at any previous time in the Occupation.²¹ As the availability of film and other raw materials declined rapidly in the build-up to the D-Day landings, the SGI found the process of making documentaries increasingly difficult. Although the Direction du Cinéma set about

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp.16-17

¹⁸ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.56

¹⁹ 'Synthèse des Rapports mensuels des Préfets (Zone nord et Zone sud),' 15/02/1943, IHTP

²⁰ For Henriot's broadcasts, see Kay Chadwick, pp.40-65

²¹ 'Synthèse des Rapports mensuels des Préfets (Zone nord et Zone sud),' 15/02/1943, IHTP

commissioning eight new documentaries per year ‘in the national interest’, having signed a contract in September 1943 with Verdet-Kléber’s studio, Veka films, only five such films were released before the Liberation, illustrating the scale of material restrictions on filmmaking in 1944.²² The barriers to documentary making in 1944 were laid bare in a memorandum from Henriot to Laval in May, in which the new Secrétaire d’État called for a change in the financial regulations of the film industry in order to make new documentaries.²³ The financial precariousness of small production companies obliged Galey, and then Lapeyronnie, to rely on *France-Actualités*, which benefited from priority access to film and was supposed in any case to provide the distribution for Verdet-Kléber’s ‘national interest’ films,²⁴ to produce its own extended documentaries.

This commissioning of the *France-Actualités* team in response to the financial problems of smaller producers prompted the release of a remarkable example of 1944 Vichy documentary. *Une Page d’histoire*, released in April 1944, focussed on Pétain’s only visit to Paris in the course of the Occupation, ostensibly to pay homage to the victims of Allied bombardment, echoing the reference to the ‘bombardements’ in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*. Produced at a time of the violent repression of the Resistance, and during major upheaval of the editorial team of *France-Actualités*, the film nevertheless maintains the same approach as previous documentaries in that it overlooked exclusionary legislation and acts, while also emphasising autonomy. Despite the replacement of Henri Clerc as Director-General of the newsreel, his apparently collaborationist successor Maurice Touzé appeared to continue the same style and approach as Clerc’s *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, even after introducing consistently pro-Nazi reports in the weekly editions of *France-Actualités*, including one especially vitriolic report on the actions of the Waffen SS from March 1944.²⁵ In fact, although there had been several changes in the leadership of the

²² Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.40

²³ ‘Note pour Monsieur le Chef du Gouvernement,’ 23/05/1944, AN F41 92

²⁴ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.40

²⁵ ‘Discours de Léon Degrelle au Palais de Chaillot,’ in *France-Actualités*, 10/03/1944, INA AFE86002546

newsreel, some of the rank and file personnel of *France-Actualités*, including Pétain's personal cameraman René Brut, who had joined the production from *FAPG*, and Jacques Bretueil, the narrator, both remained at the newsreel until the Liberation.²⁶ The presence of Brut, in particular, whose dislike of collaboration encouraged him to produce deliberately some poor quality shots of a policeman killed by the Resistance in 1943,²⁷ provided some continuity with the earlier examples of Vichy newsreel, and went against the collaborationist changes of early 1944. Although Touzé was employed for his pro-German credentials, he was obliged to rely on existing personnel, without the same dedication to collaboration, in order to maintain production of the newsreel. It was thus with this diverse mixture of collaborationist and seasoned film professionals, contrary to the wider reactionary trend in other forms of contemporary propaganda, that *Une Page d'histoire* was produced and released to French audiences. The context of *Une Page d'histoire* was, then, one in which the French people were preoccupied with both an impending Allied invasion, as recorded in the *synthèse* of the Prefect reports—'la majorité des rapports dépeignent le nouveau climat, fait d'attente anxieuse, comme le résultat de la conviction très généralement [...] que la création de second front et le débarquement des Alliés sur notre territoire sont désormais imminents'²⁸—and the material hardships of everyday life, specifically the ongoing constraints of rationing.

ii. Paris libre? A vision of French autonomy in *Une Page d'histoire*

Such was the secrecy and fear of attack surrounding Pétain's journey to the capital that the official cavalcade left Vichy sufficiently early to arrive in Paris on the 26th of April by 9.30am.²⁹ Yet the images which appeared in *Une Page d'histoire*, and in the initial, shorter newsreel report released in the 28th of April edition of *France-Actualités*,³⁰ betrayed the apparently spontaneous public response to the Marshal's Parisian tour. A brief reference to

²⁶ Brut and Breteil both feature in the details of the two films in the INA and CNC catalogue entries.

²⁷ See Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.54

²⁸ 'Synthèse des Rapports mensuels des Préfets (Zone nord et Zone sud),' 15/02/1943, IHTP

²⁹ On Pétain's visit to Paris, see especially Michèle Cointet, *Pétain et les Français, 1940-1951*, pp.263-267

³⁰ 'Le Maréchal Pétain à Paris,' in *France-Actualités*, 28/04/1944, INA AFE86002676

Pétain's arrival broadcast on Radio-Vichy earlier in the day³¹ encouraged thousands of French people to descend on the Place du Grève in front of the Hôtel de Ville. The scenes of the joyous, affectionate crowds were similar to the outpouring of emotion in Montluçon and Commentry in 1941, projected in Este's documentary, and also culminated in the singing of the *Marseillaise*. In Paris, though, the significance of the national anthem was far greater; banned throughout the Occupied Zone by the German authorities for all four years of Vichy rule, the anthem acted as a reminder of life before the Occupation. Indeed, that the performance of the patriotic *Marseillaise* also appeared in both the initial newsreel report and in *Une Page d'histoire* is especially intriguing, and raises some important questions about the motivations of the filmmakers.

The film, which defies the financial pressures on the wider documentary film industry and runs for 22 minutes and 25 seconds, is also a gushing tribute to the Marshal on the occasion of his 88th birthday. To introduce the principal subject of the documentary, the film opens with a Francisque, before cutting to a book opening dramatically, providing visual reinforcement of the 'Page d'histoire' promised in the title. Unusually for Vichy documentary films, the screen is then filled with the credits of the production and with each turn of the page, the musical soundtrack intensifies before the camera cuts eventually to the scene in Vichy. Positioned behind the door of the Hôtel du Parc, the camera focuses on the many policemen in their ceremonial uniform that line the street. Breteuil announces proudly that 'le Maréchal Pétain fête ses 88 ans,' as the Marshal, accompanied by a young lady, walks down the steps of the building to face the huge crowds outside. The camera's positioning, behind the Marshal as he descends the steps, ensures that the image presented to the audience is one of an upright, physically capable military man and the camera is sufficiently far away to almost obscure Pétain's difficulty in tackling the three broad steps. As Pétain arrives at street level, Breteuil claims that 'à Vichy, la cérémonie traditionnelle des couleurs paraît aujourd'hui plus émouvante encore.' As a huge *tricolore*, with its firmly-

³¹ Michèle Cointet, p.263

established status as the patriotic national flag, is raised on the flagpole attached to the Hôtel du Parc, the Marshal proudly returns the salute. Militaristic music plays as the camera lingers on Pétain's face, before panning out to reveal the sheer density of the crowds. Cutting again to a close-up of the armed policemen on parade and lining the streets, Touzé's film emphasises the military strength of France under Pétain, led by the Marshal himself, resplendent in uniform. The gathered men appear ready to serve their nation and their leader, while the crowd bursts into cheers and shouts of 'Vive le Maréchal' as the flag is finally raised.

The camera cuts between the images of the proud, apparently fit and strong young policemen to the elderly Marshal and then to a group of much younger boys in the crowd, as if to demonstrate that the military prowess embodied by the Victor of Verdun will not be lost in years to come. The boys, who apparently have been permitted to stand together unaccompanied, cheer and wave at the camera. As Pétain slowly shakes hands with colleagues, the camera cuts to a group of girls and their families who line the road outside the Hôtel du Parc, and Breteuil announces that 'plus droit que jamais, gardien d'autant d'épreuves et de responsabilité, de jeunesse, de l'âme, de l'esprit et surtout de cœur, le grand soldat est bien le chef autour de qui se trouve l'unité française.' As the Marshal sets out at marching pace to inspect the crowd, several young girls break through the police cordon and present flowers to Pétain, with further excited, and feverish, shouts of 'Vive Pétain' and 'Vive le Maréchal.' The visible shock and annoyance on the face of one of Pétain's entourage betrays that this was clearly not planned; the very fact that it is included in the documentary at all might well be due to the Marshal's professional, grandfatherly way of dealing with this unexpected barrage of flowers. As the cameramen move closer to achieve a clearer shot, the Marshal appears more vulnerable than in the initial parade sequence and despite his benevolent smile, Pétain's eyes suggest that he is actually rather concerned at this breach of security. In due course, the girls are led back to the cordon, and Pétain returns to his residence.

From the very first sequence, then, the film sets out to champion French strength. The scenes outside the centre of Vichy government at the Hôtel du Parc appear calculated to emphasise the political autonomy of Pétain and his government. There are, of course, no Germans present and the armed police escort gives the impression of continued French military prowess, reflecting the techniques used in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and in *Fidélité*. Pétain appears, from a distance at least, as a proud representative of French military standards with his upright posture and full dress uniform, complete with *Képi*. The camera work, with cutting between the images of Pétain, with his reputation as the Victor of Verdun and thus the symbol of France's glorious military past, the apparently strong *gendarmes* and the young boys in the crowd, demonstrates the strength of the French nation in the past, the present and the future. Here in the nation's temporary capital, a fact simply ignored by Breteuil in his commentary, there are no checks on French power under Pétain and certainly no signs of the increasingly-bold actions of the internal Resistance, one month after the violent suppression of the Maquis at Glières. Despite the inclusion of the incident with the young girls, probably designed to emphasise the mass popularity of Pétain, but which betrays the fear for the Marshal's safety amongst his entourage and Pétain's own physical fragility, the overall impression in the film's opening two minutes is of the continued strength of France under Vichy, and the nation's strong potential for the future. The *tricolore*, with its status as 'l'emblème de la seule patrie,' in Raoul Girardet's assessment,³² features prominently in the opening sequence; not only is the flag formally raised outside the Hôtel du Parc, but families in the crowd and functionaries are also seen clutching flags. Used in connection with the images of military strength surrounding the Marshal, the presence of the *tricolore* adds to the emphasis on French pride developed by Touzé, while also providing a clear link with life before the Occupation. When added to the absence of the German authorities throughout the film, the use of the *tricolore* suggests that France remains the same independent, proud nation that it has always been.

³² Raoul Girardet, 'Les Trois Couleurs,' p.28



Figure 13: Pétain and his police guards salute the *tricolore* on the occasion of the Marshal's 88th birthday



Figure 14: The armed French guard lining the streets outside the Hôtel du Parc offers evidence of the continuity of French military prowess

The camera then cuts to a different scene, at the Pavillon Sévigné, where, Breteuil informs the audience, the Marshal has chosen to meet colleagues and their families and ‘c’est au milieu [des enfants de ces collaborateurs] que Philippe Pétain, Maréchal de France, désira passer ces premières heures de cette journée, les premiers pas d’une grande semaine d’histoire.’ As Pétain makes his way from the Château to the gardens, a *tricolore* is shown blowing in the breeze, once again linking these scenes of celebration to life before the Occupation. In the next shot, Pétain and his wife are mobbed by dozens of young children as the militaristic music which accompanies the scenes of the formal parade at the Hôtel du Parc continues. The camera cuts between a shot of the Marshal leading some children towards the Château and scenes inside the building, where a reception is underway. In civilian attire, Pétain looks more like a particularly thrilled grandfather than the Victor of Verdun. Nevertheless, the dramatic musical accompaniment ensures that these otherwise mundane scenes maintain the sense of occasion surrounding Pétain’s birthday. In the next shot, a group of young girls once again surrounds the Marshal, demonstrating Pétain’s attachment to the family. The presence of these young girls not only demonstrates the maintenance of traditional family mores under Vichy, with children dutifully respecting their elders, but also reflects the emphasis on the young boys in the crowd in the opening sequence, hinting at the potential for France in the hands of these exemplary young ladies. Whereas Merlin’s *Le Culte des héros* emphasised the strength of French women of child-bearing age, Pétain’s affection for these young girls, and the amount of screentime they

receive, suggests that France benefits from a ready supply of future mothers and emphasising again the importance of youth for the future of the nation.

The camera cuts again from the reception to the outside of a church, where Pétain is met by another large crowd following mass, to a shot of two boys crossing the road in front of the church to hand Pétain a bouquet of flowers. Breteuil notes that 'ce sont encore les sourires d'enfants qui accueillent le chef de l'état lorsqu'on accompagne le Maréchal en sortant de l'église où il vient d'entendre la messe.' Pétain duly hands the flowers to his wife, who continues to talk to the Priest. As with the earlier reception, the emphasis in this sequence is that the rhythms of everyday life continue in Vichy unperturbed by any external events; not only are the Germans absent, but Pétain's attendance at Mass suggest that there is no threat to this typical Sunday routine. Indeed, in the next sequence, Pétain is shown taking a walk through the town in the company of two attendants. Breteuil reminds the audience that just because it is a Sunday and the Marshal's birthday, there is no reason for Pétain to cease his normal activities and 'cette journée d'anniversaire n'empêche pas Monsieur le Maréchal d'accomplir sa promenade quotidienne.' While at first Pétain is greeted by crowds in the city centre, he is soon left alone and completes his walk in peace. The absence of any serious bodyguards suggests that Pétain is not fearful for his own safety, again creating the impression that life continues as normal, even at a time of political upheaval and increasing violence. The musical accompaniment to this sequence even reflects the apparent normality of the occasion, replacing the militaristic score of the trooping of the colour with an upbeat orchestral piece.

The camera then cuts to another military setting, at Pétain's summer residence, the Château de Charmet, where the Marshal has decided to review his personal guard. Close-up shots of the tall, broad, armed policemen are followed by a wider shot which emphasises the scale of this unit. As with the opening sequence, the review seems designed to emphasise French military strength and each man is equipped with a rifle and stands proudly to attention. The military beat returns to the film's musical soundtrack as the Marshal slowly makes his way

along the parade. Breteuil records proudly that ‘ces hommes, qui ne le quittent guère, ont voulu lui témoigner qu’ils sont à cette heure-là plus que jamais fidèles au Maréchal, au pays, au drapeau.’ The emphasis on loyalty in Breteuil’s commentary reflects the loyalty shown to Pétain and to France in earlier films, notably *Fidélité*, but also *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, where colonial troops remain loyal to France despite the loss, only briefly acknowledged, of their home countries. The *tricolore* appears alongside these images of French military pride, proudly displayed by one of the guards and also etched onto the drums carried by the unit’s band. Here again, the *tricolore* acts as a reminder of previous French achievements and of life before the Occupation, while also encouraging the audience to take pride in the strength and prowess of Pétain’s personal guards. Through including shots of the *tricolore* in this sequence, Touzé might also have sought to emphasise that these scenes of military pride represented the ‘true’ version of France in 1944, an autonomous country under Pétain’s guidance and without any challenges to its power, internally or externally. As in earlier documentaries, Touzé’s inclusion of the *tricolore* could well have been designed to reinforce the legitimacy of the Marshal and his government. Through ignoring the Resistance altogether while simultaneously emphasising French military strength, the suggestion is that Pétain is the natural, legitimate leader, capable of maintaining French national pride.

The next sequence further underlines the link between Pétain and France developed through the use of the *tricolore* in both earlier military sequences. The camera cuts from the scenes of Pétain enjoying a picnic with the families of his personal guard to a shot of the Marshal sitting behind his desk in the Hôtel du Parc. Fresh from inspecting his troops, Pétain, Breteuil informs the audience ‘devait examiner l’impression des timbres imprimés par la poste pour l’occasion de son 88ème anniversaire.’ The next shot also seems intended to highlight the Marshal’s legitimacy, displaying a row of stamps on which Pétain’s portrait appears above ‘France,’ thereby directly linking Pétain to the nation. In the same way as the *tricolore* is used in earlier sequences, the stamps ensure that there is little doubt in the mind

of the audience about who is the legitimate leader of the country. Here, again, the suggestion is also that life continues as 'normal' and far from concerning himself with internal and external challenges to his government, or debating such serious political issues as the STO, Pétain has chosen to spend time reviewing these previews of his official stamps. As with the scenes of the Marshal's promenade around Vichy, the suggestion is that the rhythms of everyday life continue under Pétain, even in 1944. While there is no consideration of the fact that audience members might not have been able to afford to buy stamps in the climate of increased rationing, Touzé appears to be encouraging the audience to rest assured that some aspects to life before the Occupation have been carefully maintained. The replacement of the Republican symbol of Marianne by Pétain as the symbol of the Vichy state³³ is also overlooked; this careful inspection is, in fact, presented as though the Marshal has always appeared on such official documents, again underlining the sense of normality and continuity present throughout the film.

The following scene rather undermines the sense of decorum and military demonstrated elsewhere in the film. Having approved his stamps, Pétain is shown working at his desk, emphasising his commitment to maintaining an apparently 'normal' routine. An aide recalls the 'belle cérémonie' for the Marshal's birthday and records woodenly that 'les Français ont été heureux de fêter votre anniversaire,' clearly ignoring the other potential preoccupations of the audience, such as material hardships, especially rationing. Indeed, in April 1944, the *synthèse* of the Prefect reports noted that 'chacun se demande si le ravitaillement officiel qui a si bien fait la preuve de son incapacité d'assurer l'arrivée de quantités suffisantes sur la table familiale pourra, au moment de la crise, offrir aux citoyens de quoi ne pas mourir de faim.'³⁴ The film, does, though, offer a brief acknowledgement of the wider political situation, when Pétain replies, equally woodenly, that 'je n'étais pas tellement prêt à me rejouir pendant une époque de massacres.' This rare acknowledgement in the film of events

³³ Rémy Handourtzet, 'Encadrer ou contrôler?' in Laurent Gevère and Robert Hue (Eds.), *La propagande sous Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, 1999) p.126

³⁴ 'Synthèse mensuel des Rapports des Préfets de la Zone nord et la Zone sud,' 02/05/1944, IHTP

beyond Pétain's immediate entourage is a reference, though, not to the *Milice* but to Allied bombing; in the next shot, the screen is filled with images of burning houses and even a cathedral on fire, probably that in Rouen. Yet Touzé does not linger long on these images of the destruction caused by Allied aircraft. Instead, the camera cuts to a shot of young men in the uniform of the *Chantiers* marching through a town, in a scene very similar to those that appear in Este's *Jeunes de France*, before the subsequent shot portrays bare-chested boys marching through a field. Pétain, acting as narrator, announced that he hopes that 'les enfants peuvent nous aider à se lever.'

The suggestion, then, is that while some parts of France are being destroyed by the Allies, French youth will once again help to rebuild the nation. This juxtaposition allows Touzé to contrast this brief glimpse at the genuine hardships experienced by people in the north, presented as a phenomenon beyond the control of the Vichy regime, with a solution, in the form of the happy, strong men of the *Chantiers*, returning to a more reassuring theme promoted in earlier films. Touzé, in the same way as his predecessor Clerc in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, thus offers only a brief reference to Allied bombing, which is soon left behind in favour of a reference to French strength; whereas Clerc promotes the maintenance of the French colonial model, at a time when the Empire was under threat, Touzé draws on the idea of the virility and physical prowess of French youth supporting their nation and family. In this sense, then, the apparently more collaborationist, more pro-German Touzé in fact continued a technique used by the man forced out of his post because of German demands. Despite Clerc's absence, the film demonstrates continuity in approach between the two men, with Touzé's reference to the strength of French youth in fact reflecting the same approach as that used by Philippe Este. Although the political context and the leadership of the SGI were far more collaborationist and divisive in 1944 than they had been earlier in the Occupation, Touzé's juxtaposition of Allied bombardment with the great potential of French youth in fact suggests that documentary film could still ignore reality.

Interestingly, despite acknowledging the importance of Allied bombing as a hardship experienced by French people, Pétain's commentary does not mention the Allies explicitly, unlike Henriot's contemporary radio broadcasts, which were highly contemptuous of the British, and indeed unlike contemporary posters, which also promoted anti-British sentiment. Shortly before Pétain's birthday celebrations, in a broadcast about Franco-German relations during his slot on Radio-Vichy, Henriot urged the audience to think of the British as the real enemy, saying, 'invoquer, pour les accuser de trahison, l'inimitié irréductible qui doit dresser éternellement la France contre l'Allemagne, est ridicule si l'on songe qu'au cours des siècles l'Angleterre s'est montrée une ennemie bien plus tenace et irréductible encore.'³⁵ Throughout April 1944, in fact, Henriot's broadcasts reveal a vehement Anglophobia and anti-Americanism; in a broadcast on the following day, Henriot's scathing criticism of Britain led to his suggestion that 'le rôle mondial de la Grande-Bretagne est terminé.'³⁶ On the 20th of April, Henriot described the British as the 'ennemi héréditaire.'³⁷ At the same time, a poster from 1944, produced by the German-financed, Vichy-backed *Office de répartition de l'affichage français* (ORAFF)³⁸ depicted a chained Joan of Arc in a saintly martyr's pose as flames gather at her feet, from the burning ruins of Rouen. The poster's caption emphasises its Anglophobe content, saying 'les Assassins reviennent toujours sur les lieux de leur crime.' Having burnt Joan of Arc at the stake, the British are thus shown to be returning to complete the destruction of Rouen.

Yet this Anglophobia, and Henriot's anti-Americanism, simply does not appear in *Page d'histoire's* portrayal of Allied bombing. As the chosen replacement to Clerc at the top of *France-Actualités*, did Touzé, then, enjoy sufficient autonomy to downplay such sentiment, while emphasising French strength through his portrayal of Pétain's police guard and the

³⁵ Philippe Henriot, 'Le cœur et la raison,' broadcast on Radio-Vichy 17/04/1944; transcribed in Kay Chadwick (Ed.), p.503

³⁶ Philippe Henriot, 'La Bible blindée et le lion empaillé,' broadcast on Radio-Vichy, 18/04/1944; transcribed in Kay Chadwick (Ed.), p.504

³⁷ Philippe Henriot, 'L'ennemi héréditaire,' broadcast on Radio-Vichy, 20/04/1944; transcribed in Kay Chadwick (Ed.), p.517

³⁸ Author unknown, 'Les Assassins reviennent toujours sur les lieux de leur crime,' 1944. AN 72AJ/1108

physically-capable young men of the *Chantiers*? Touzé was perceived to be more collaborationist than Clerc, which makes the absence of anti-Allied views in the film all the more surprising. Nevertheless, Galey was still in post in April 1944, and still running the cinema section of the SGI. Perhaps Galey was a moderating influence on the depiction of Allied bombing in Touzé's film, which helped to avoid the same vitriolic portrayal of such events in poster and radio propaganda. This absence of anti-British sentiment also presents further evidence of the particularity of documentary film when compared to other media, including newsreel, the material normally produced by the team behind *Page d'histoire*. Indeed, at the same time as the release of *Page d'histoire*, a report in *France-Actualités*, narrated by Henriot himself,³⁹ accused the British and Americans of committing atrocities and of using civilians as military targets. Yet despite Henriot's apparent involvement in the official newsreel coverage of the bombings, Touzé's documentary film does not seem to have been affected by such close ministerial involvement. Instead, Touzé seems to have been able to produce a film which ignores such exclusionary rhetoric, and which, while not overlooking the bombardment altogether, does nevertheless maintain a focus on French strength under Pétain, instead of potentially divisive themes. If this sequence is not necessarily escapist, perhaps for Touzé documentary film nevertheless offered an opportunity to offer some form of reassurance to the audience through downplaying anti-Allied sentiment, and drawing on the protection of family values, and service to the nation, inherent in the *Chantiers* movement, which was popular before the Occupation. Indeed, although the film does not ignore the reality of bombing altogether, it does seek to offer a solution through promoting the hard work and physical prowess of French youth required to repair this damage, returning to a more inclusive and less divisive theme.

Destruction caused by Allied bombing, though never explicitly attributed to the British and American air forces in the film, in fact plays a further role in the next scene, providing the excuse for Pétain to travel to Paris. Having met his military guard of honour at what appears

³⁹ 'Bombardement de la région parisienne et de Rouen,' in *France-Actualités*, 21/04/1944, INA AFE 86002666

to be the Demarcation Line, but which is never explicitly labelled as such, Pétain is shown travelling to the capital. Here, again, the emphasis is on French autonomy and military strength, for there are no Germans present at all and the officers who greet the Marshal are in full dress uniform. In the next shot, Pétain is accompanied by a motorcycle escort, which travels with him to the centre of Paris, where a small number of Parisians chance upon his arrival. The streets of Paris are also lined with French policemen, not German soldiers, adding to the appearance of French independence. A full military guard of honour is also present in the next scene, at the entrance to Notre Dame, where the Marshal is met by the Archbishop of Paris. The same dramatic militaristic music that accompanied the trooping of the colour in Vichy provides the soundtrack to this triumphal arrival at the cathedral, heightening the sense that the audience should be proud of the Marshal's visit, while also, perhaps, appealing to wider French patriotism. While the next scene portrays Pétain taking part in the funeral service of Parisians recently killed in the bombardments, again without any specific attribution to the Allies, it is the scene that follows which is of most interest with regards the promotion of a more moderate and less exclusionary version of life under Vichy.

Cutting from the images of the interior of Notre Dame, the camera follows Pétain as he leaves the service and travels the short distance to the Hôtel de Ville, where he is greeted by cheering crowds. In the same way as for the Marshal's journey to the cathedral, the streets are lined with policemen, resplendent in their dress uniforms. The absence of German soldiers is all the more striking in this brief journey from one Paris landmark to another and the streets appear to be very much the preserve of Parisians, not the occupying forces. As the camera carefully follows the Marshal's progress, the crowd is heard shouting 'Vive Pétain' and 'Vive le Maréchal.' The semblance of French military autonomy is again projected when Pétain reaches the Hôtel de Ville, where he is met by yet another guard of honour, composed of senior military officers. As in previous scenes, there is no suggestion that Vichy simply did not enjoy any genuine political autonomy in April 1944, or that Pétain's

role had been reduced to simply 'Head of State' and that his role as head of government had been assumed by Laval in November 1943.⁴⁰ Rather, the shots of these senior French officers greeting Pétain at the door to the Hôtel de Ville offers an image of France led by a powerful leader, with no apparent checks on the government's authority. The film's dramatic militaristic music resumes as the camera cuts to the interior of the building, accompanying the scenes of military and political autonomy which greeted the Marshal on the streets of Paris. Pétain is then shown walking out onto the balcony, as the camera cuts to a shot of the gathered crowd, cheering and shouting for the Marshal. Breteuil announces that 'la foule s'est encore accrue. Paris, ville enthousiaste d'avoir le chef de l'état dans ses murs.'

Arriving on the balcony to cheers from the crowd below, the Marshal, along with his entourage, is shown appealing for calm before launching into a short speech in which he acknowledges that 'je viens vous faire une petite visite. Je ne peux pas m'adresser à chacun de vous ; vous êtes trop nombreux. Donc à bientôt, j'espère.' Following this speech, the camera cuts back to a close-up of the crowd, picking out the joyous faces of the individuals in the front row; the impression, as with the earlier scenes of the crowd before and after the Marshal's entrance into the Hôtel de Ville and on his arrival into the capital, is that of sheer delight on the part of the Parisian audience. The crowd then erupts into applause and an apparently spontaneous rendition of the *Marseillaise*.

The inclusion of the anthem, performed in broad daylight and with the sanction of those members of the Vichy leadership present at the time, some of whom are shown standing proudly to attention while others join in the singing, is arguably the most remarkable feature of *Une Page d'histoire*. For Michel Vovelle, the *Marseillaise* in the years before the Occupation was widely perceived as 'plus que jamais l'hymne officiel, auréolé de tous les prestiges de la victoire [de la première guerre mondiale.]'⁴¹ The national anthem was, then, by the time of the Vichy regime, closely associated with the patriotic fervour that had

⁴⁰ See for example Robert O. Paxton, p.324

⁴¹ Michel Vovelle, 'La Marseillaise,' p.126

greeted victory over the Germans in World War I, while also representing *the* anthem of a broad spectrum of the French people. Not only was the *Marseillaise* an anthem banned by the occupiers, but its performance in public, in Vovelle's assessment, still conjured up images of the defence of the motherland against the same occupiers in 1914. That the anthem was included in *Une Page d'histoire*, released across the entire country, unlike the rendition of the *Marseillaise* in the 1941 film *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commeny*, released only in the Unoccupied Zone, therefore raises important questions about the motivations of Touzé and his team, and indeed those of the SGI leadership. Whereas the crowd's performance of the anthem in Paris in response to Pétain's first visit to the capital can perhaps be explained as an outpouring of emotion after nearly four full years of German repression, the decision to include the *Marseillaise* in Touzé's film, produced by a newsreel which was financed and, after Clerc's departure in March, largely controlled by the Germans, is less easily explained. The anthem represents something of a culmination in the patriotic portrayal of life under Pétain developed throughout the film, from the opening scenes of the trooping the colour at Vichy, through to the review of Pétain's personal bodyguard and the Marshal's police and military escort to the capital. The rendition of the *Marseillaise* also maintains the impression of 'normal' life from before the Occupation, continuing the tradition of performing the anthem on official state occasions under the Third Republic.⁴² The realities of life for the French audience in April 1944, though, were so obviously different from this portrayal of sustained autonomy that the inclusion of the anthem in Touzé's film is all the more surprising. To see the *Marseillaise* performed in Paris, apparently free from any occupying power and patrolled only by French police, was at odds with what the audience knew to be the reality of governance and life in the capital.

⁴² Michel Vovelle, p.126



Figure 15: Pétain appears on the balcony of the Paris

Hôtel de Ville



Figure 16: The Parisian crowd break into a

rendition of the *Marseillaise*

Why, then, did Touzé include this scene of a mass rendition of an anthem with clear patriotic overtones, in a Paris which appeared entirely controlled by the Vichy authorities in his film, in such stark contrast to the political and everyday realities? Was this scene perhaps calculated to heighten patriotic sentiments, in the same way as the earlier militaristic sequences appeared to emphasise French autonomy and strength? It seems unlikely that Touzé would have wished to undermine the Vichy leadership, and indeed Pétain; the emphasis throughout the film on the appearance of French military strength and political autonomy suggests a powerful nation under the Marshal, which is further developed in the *Marseillaise* scene. Given that, in the assessment of Christian Delage, Henri Rousso and Denis Peschanski, Pétain's visit to Paris was prompted by a need to 'chercher une légitimité déjà moribonde,'⁴³ the sequence does little to undermine this legitimacy and instead emphasises Pétain's claim to be *the* leader of the French people. Receiving the plaudits and admiration of the crowd in the capital city, and greeted by the national anthem, the scene suggests that this vision of autonomy is the true version of life under Pétain. Like many French people, Touzé may well have shared the broad affection for Pétain as a legendary figure that was still in place in 1944, and as recorded in the *synthèse* of the Prefect reports for February 1944.⁴⁴ Indeed, with the exception of the single shot in which the Marshal looks a little infirm in response to the mob of young girls in Vichy, the rest of the film is

⁴³ *Les Voyages du Maréchal* (Dir: Christian Delage, 1990)

⁴⁴ 'Synthèse mensuel des rapports des Préfets (Zone Nord et Zone Sud),' 15/02/1944, IHTP

highly sympathetic to Pétain. Since, by April 1944, the *Marseillaise* was also associated with the Resistance, having been appropriated by de Gaulle using the French Service of the BBC,⁴⁵ the inclusion of the *Marseillaise* scene might have been intended as a means of reclaiming the anthem, thus furthering the legitimacy of the Marshal and his government. The performance of the anthem by Pétain's entourage would also support this explanation, for if the Vichy authorities could not normally sing the *Marseillaise* in public in the former Occupied Zone, this was an opportunity to express their claim to the anthem and thus their legitimacy as representatives of the government.

Yet there are other aspects of the scene which are more problematic. The visible outpouring of patriotic emotion in the scene, while not detracting from the sense of autonomy and legitimacy around the Vichy authorities and Pétain in particular, could nevertheless be perceived as an expression of independence. Although the anthem itself had perhaps lost the connection to its revolutionary past by the time of the Occupation, any performance of the anthem was, after all, an action prohibited by the occupiers. Coupled with the broader, patriotic association between the *Marseillaise* and the defence of the nation in World War I, which as Vovelle has noted, was still reflected in public views towards the anthem in the years preceding the Occupation, the *Marseillaise* sequence thus represented something of a challenge to the German presence in France. This is especially intriguing given that the sequence appears to have been retained in the film despite opportunities to omit it; the anthem also appeared on screen in the initial newsreel report which preceded the release of *Une Page d'histoire*. Indeed, the crowd scenes which appear in the film are, in fact, an edited version of the earlier images and for example a shot of a distinctly unhappy elderly woman which appeared in the initial newsreel report is replaced in the documentary by a smiling younger woman.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See for example Laurent Gevereau, 'Y a-t-il un style de Vichy?' in Laurent Geverau and Robert Hue (Eds.), *La propagande sous Vichy 1940-1944* (Paris: Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, 1999) p.143; Michel Vovelle, p.132

⁴⁶ This is a point also made by Delage, Rousso and Peschanski in *Les Voyages du Maréchal*

Yet the production team apparently chose not to remove the performance of the *Marseillaise* from the documentary. What, then, lay behind Touzé's decision to include the *Marseillaise* scene in full, including the visible sense of patriotic pride which might have challenged the authority of the German occupiers? Since Touzé was chosen for the role of Director-General of *France-Actualités* precisely for his collaborationist credentials, and because of his apparent proximity to the fiercely collaborationist Henriot, would he have sought to undermine Vichy's relationship with the Germans? Even if Touzé shared both the admiration for Pétain as a military hero, and broad support for the *Marseillaise* as the national anthem amongst the majority of the French people, it seems unlikely that he would have set out to use both of these 'symbols' (the personality of the Marshal and the anthem) to challenge the German occupiers. Indeed, the inclusion of this rendition of the *Marseillaise* was arguably a greater challenge to the project of collaboration, and a starker contrast with the political reality, than the earlier omission of anti-American and Anglophobic sentiments in the film's references to aerial bombardment prior to Pétain's departure for Paris. The *Marseillaise* scene, with its portrayal of an autonomous Vichy in control of the capital and with no potential challenge to its independence, does not, in fact, appear to reflect Touzé's political leanings and support for collaboration, which was, by contrast, reflected in the increasing number of newsreel reports dedicated to collaboration and to exclusionary themes under Touzé's leadership.⁴⁷

The discrepancy between Touzé's political credentials and the inclusion of the highly patriotic *Marseillaise* scene in *Une Page d'histoire* raises questions about Touzé's role in making the film. If Touzé was unlikely to challenge or undermine the German authorities, then why was the scene included in this final version of Pétain's trip to Paris? The continued presence of some of the original *FAPG* team, and the control still exercised by Galey in April 1944, provides a possible explanation for the inclusion of such a highly-charged and

⁴⁷ See for example 'Centième anniversaire de la naissance de Drumont,' in *France-Actualités*, 12/05/1944, INA AFE86002696 and 'La LVF sur le front de l'est,' in *France-Actualités*, 26/05/1944, INA AFE86001997

patriotic scene. Like many others featuring Pétain, the scene was filmed by René Brut, one of the original *FAPG* production team and a man who had deliberately sabotaged the filming of pro-*Milice* images in 1943. Given Brut's long service to the Marshal, it seems unlikely that he would have been opposed to Pétain, and, like many French people, he probably shared in the broad support and reverence for the Marshal which continued throughout the Occupation. Yet Brut's actions in 1943 suggest an absence of support for collaboration and for exclusionary measures. Although Touzé was obliged to make use of Brut's experience as a well-established cameraman, Brut's position on the newsreel team almost certainly did not stretch to final editorial decisions. Indeed, had Brut ever enjoyed such editorial powers, his stock fell sharply following his failure to produce images of sufficient quality in 1943, with the newsreel's editor-in-chief, Jean Chitry, closely supervising Brut's next placement.⁴⁸

It would seem more likely that the decision to include the scene, like that to commission the documentary, resided in part with Louis-Émile Galey. While Henriot exercised tight control over the poster and radio sections of the SGI, he appears to have initially given Galey some autonomy at the request of Laval.⁴⁹ In any case, given Henriot's strong support for collaboration, it would also seem unlikely that, regardless of any support for either Pétain or for the *Marseillaise*, he would have sought to challenge German authority by playing up French independence in Paris. Galey, by contrast, had no such documented support for collaboration or indeed connections to the collaborationist clique within the government, which included Henriot. It seems likely, then, that the emphasis on autonomy and independence in the film, and in the *Marseillaise* sequence in particular, so at odds with the political realities in April 1944, appealed to Galey's sense that the cinema ought to reflect the interests of the viewer in escaping from everyday life. Perhaps, too, Galey shared the broad admiration for Pétain espoused by the majority of the population. Yet the hints at autonomy and the possibilities for a proud, independent France in the *Marseillaise* scene also reflect other films commissioned by Galey's cinema section of the SGI, not least

⁴⁸ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.55

⁴⁹ Kay Chadwick, p.17

Masson's *Nourrir la France* and Merlin's *Le Culte des héros*. There is no record of Galey carrying out any acts of sabotage, unlike René Brut, and for a man who served Vichy so assiduously it would also seem unlikely that Galey ever set out to undermine the regime. Yet perhaps Galey knew in April 1944 that his place at the SGI was under threat; despite Laval's earlier, and unusual, intervention in the affairs of the Direction du Cinéma with his vote of support for Galey, Henriot managed to appoint collaborationist supporters to positions of leadership in the cinema and radio sections of the SGI. The replacement of Galey's friend, Clerc, by Touzé also marked the beginnings of a collaborationist rebranding of the Vichy cinema world. If Galey, who was replaced in May by the Henriot acolyte Roland Lapeyronnie, wished to challenge the presence of the German authorities, spurred on by the Propaganda Abteilung's refusal to grant resources to the *Association pour la diffusion du cinéma rural*,⁵⁰ then *Une Page d'histoire* was his last chance to do so. In the absence of concrete evidence, it is possible only to say that Galey appears to have maintained sufficient autonomy in his role at the head of the Direction du Cinéma to have ensured, should he have wished, that the scene was included in the film, and thus to challenge the authority of the Germans in a form of *Vichyssois résistance*.

What is clear is that Galey, like the majority of documentary makers who worked under his supervision at the SGI and at COIC, was passionate about film, and *Une Page d'histoire* bears all of the hallmarks of a film which would have met the expectations of audiences on their visit to the cinema through ignoring aspects of reality and offering a version of life under Vichy which was not only reminiscent of life before the Occupation, but also largely escapist. The *Marseillaise* scene is a perfect example of this, in that it espouses French patriotism, reflects themes which were already popular amongst the French people and, perhaps, anticipates a brighter future. It is unlikely that Galey, or indeed Touzé, Brut or any other filmmaker, could have known that the same scene would have played out in Paris four months later, on 25th of August 1944, with de Gaulle replacing Pétain, in images which were

⁵⁰ See Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, p.38

captured on film taken by the *Journal de la Résistance* of *France Libre Actualités*.⁵¹ Yet the scenes of joyous, emotional Parisians cheering their head of state in *Une Page d'Histoire*, with the German occupiers entirely absent, captured the same outpouring of patriotism, and projection of autonomy and independence as did de Gaulle's later triumphal speech and the crowd's reaction at the Hôtel de Ville.

Une Page d'histoire is, then, a film which matches the characteristics of 'propaganda' set out in the introduction and in chapter one. The version of life under Vichy which is conveyed in the film is at odds with reality, in that it ignores the German presence in France while also overlooking exclusionary and potentially divisive legislation and ideals, especially Anglophobic and anti-American sentiment. The emphasis on French military strength at every opportunity, especially in the earlier scenes at Vichy, reflects the same trend as earlier films through suggesting that France remains an independent and powerful nation, while also harnessing patriotism. The documentary also reflects the differences in content between this medium and other forms of propaganda. Whereas in 1944 radio and poster propaganda more closely reflected the exclusionary realities of the Vichy regime, in particular anti-Semitic legislation and pro-*Milice* ideals, the documentary ignores such sentiments while also downplaying anti-Allied views. Henriot's broadcasts, for example, relentlessly attacked the British and Americans, and on one occasion in January 1944 targeted 'les Juifs, les franc-maçons, les communistes, les financiers anglo-saxons, tous ceux qui ont tenu la France en tutelle pendant tant d'années.'⁵² Henriot also widely praised the *Milice*, with one broadcast in March 1944 exclusively dedicated to Darnand and his organisation.⁵³ The same broadcast, unlike documentary films like *Une Page d'histoire*, which often drew on familiar themes from before the Occupation, especially subjects which had been popular amongst the middle-classes, emphasised the distinction between Pétain's state and the past: 'Quand la République s'enlisera dans des scandales et des

⁵¹ 'Journal de la résistance: la Libération de Paris,' *France Libre Actualités*, 01/09/1944

⁵² Philippe Henriot, 'Les Mensonges d'Oberlé,' 15/01/1944, in Kay Chadwick (Ed.), p.124

⁵³ Philippe Henriot, 'La Milice et son chef,' 07/03/1944, in Kay Chadwick (Ed.), p.329

compromissions qui révolteront les h^onnetes gens, [Darnand] s'engagera [...] dans les corps francs civiques.⁵⁴ Posters, meanwhile, not only espoused anti-Allied views, as in the poster which likened the actions of the RAF to the British burning of Joan of Arc, but also promoted anti-Semitic sentiments. Arguably the most well-known such example was the infamous 'Affiche rouge',⁵⁵ produced by the same Vichy agency, the OAFF, which produced the Joan of Arc poster. The poster depicted the members of the 'Manouchan' Resistance network, part of the wider Communist *Franc-tireur et partisan* movement, with the slogan 'Libérateurs? La Libération...par l'armée du crime.' A caption beneath the names of six members of the network states that some of these men are 'juifs polonais,' while another is described as a 'juif hongrois.' The direct link between Communism (symbolised by the poster's red background), crime (noted in the slogan) and Judaism ensured that the poster not only promoted anti-Semitism but also anti-Communism. Whereas this poster drew on the common anti-Semitic theme of perceived Jewish criminality to target the *résistants*, reflecting the approach of German-funded documentary films like *Le P^éril Juif*⁵⁶ and *Les Corrupteurs*,⁵⁷ such themes were entirely ignored in *Une Page d'histoire*, and indeed in other 1944 documentaries. In later films, such as *Voyage du Maréchal Pétain à travers la France*,⁵⁸ which documents Pétain's visit to Alsace-Lorraine, and *Anniversaire*,⁵⁹ which draws on some of the opening footage of *Une Page d'histoire* to celebrate Pétain's birthday, for example, the focus continued on moderate themes, especially the use of the Pétainist cult, instead of potentially divisive and exclusionary ideals.

That *Une Page d'histoire*, as other 1944 films, overlooked exclusionary topics when the radio (driven in particular by Henriot) and posters openly promoted such themes, suggests that even in the final year of the Occupation some filmmakers, and those at the SGI responsible for controlling documentaries, were still willing and able to make films which

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ Author unknown, 'Libérateurs? Libération par l'armée du crime,' 1944, BNF, ENTQB-1-FT6

⁵⁶ *Le P^éril Juif* (Dir: Fritz Hippler, 1941 [French version])

⁵⁷ *Les Corrupteurs* (Dir: Pierre Ramelot, 1942)

⁵⁸ *Voyage du Maréchal Pétain à travers la France* (Dir: Unknown, probably Maurice Touzé, 1944)

⁵⁹ *Anniversaire* (Dir: Unknown, probably Maurice Touzé, 1944)

drew on potentially more reassuring themes than those that appeared in other media. *Une Page d'histoire* emphasised French autonomy and military pride, while also drawing on symbols like the *tricolore* and the *Marseillaise* that had the potential to remind audiences of life before the Occupation, and therefore to offer some form of reassurance of the continuity of French independence, even when none existed. There is no suggestion in the film that Pétain's regime is an extreme-right government, nor indeed that there are any restrictions on Vichy's autonomy, hence the suggestion that not only does the Marshal govern in Vichy but also exercises control in Paris. In the same way, the material hardships experienced by French audiences are entirely overlooked. What remains, thanks to the editing process which removed the shot of the unhappy elderly lady from the original newsreel footage, is an image of life under Pétain in which the average French person appears to have a sunny disposition with no apparent difficulties, and in which destruction caused by Allied bombing is transformed into an occasion which becomes an outpouring of national pride, not an occasion to attack the perpetrators. Whereas the Prefects reported to the Ministère de l'Intérieur in April 1944 on the concerns of the population regarding rationing,⁶⁰ the main preoccupation of French audiences throughout the film is assumed to be of celebrating Pétain and sharing in a sense of national pride, not worrying about material provisions. It is precisely this absence of any reference to political or everyday realities that makes *Une Page d'histoire* such an informative and typical example of Vichy documentary film in 1944; over its considerable running length, the film's dedication to projecting an inclusive, contented, autonomous version of life under Pétain had the potential to offer reassurance to the audience that such a life might one day return, despite the harsh realities of April 1944.

iii. Conclusions: analysing documentary film in 'endgame' Vichy

Une Page d'histoire was one of the final documentary films commissioned by the Vichy authorities. The number of films produced during the last year of the Occupation fell

⁶⁰ 'Synthèse mensuel des Rapports des Préfets de la Zone nord et la Zone sud,' 02/05/1944, IHTP

considerably, with *Une Page d'histoire* one of only five Vichy-produced documentaries made in 1944 according to the CNC catalogue, but the fact that the film was released at all is remarkable. Four months before the Liberation, a small group of filmmakers were still determined to make documentaries which were closer to the audience's expectations of the cinema, with its allure of escapism and opportunity to forget the hardships of everyday life, than to the realities of the Vichy regime, its ideals and its legislation. The theme of patriotism is one which permeates each of the films discussed in this chapter and in the previous two chapters. From pride in the traditional family in Merlin's *Le Jardin sans fleurs* and *Le Culte des héros*, to pride in military prowess in *Dakar*, *Fidélité*, *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and *Une Page d'histoire*, to pride in the leadership capabilities of the *cadres* in *Les Chefs de demain*, each film presented, in its different way, a version of life under Vichy which resembled that from before the Occupation, and likewise drew on themes which had been popular before that time, like the importance of the family and of the Empire, along with the widely-accepted symbols of the *tricolore* and the *Marseillaise*. That there is such little difference in the projection of life under Pétain in films from the first two years of the Occupation to the final two years is worthy of note, especially given that the political climate of 1944, following the introduction of the *Milice* and the STO in 1943 and the increasing repression of Resistance as on the Glières plateau, was very different from that of 1940.

Were, then, these filmmakers simply reflecting what the cinema audiences were interested in when they maintained the same approach throughout the Occupation? There is certainly an element of escapism in the films, since, especially in the final years of Vichy rule, the audience would have been aware of exclusionary and divisive ideals and legislation through their exposure to other, less subtle, propaganda media. If the intentions of the filmmakers revolved around allowing the audience to escape from the everyday and return to an imaginary version of life from before the Occupation, in which popular themes were celebrated and there were fewer political divisions, then it could be argued that this suited

the expectations of the audience. While little is known about audience reactions to individual documentary films, it seems that, given the commercial success of earlier documentaries such as *Fidélité*, *Travail* and *Dakar*, these films were popular; audiences appear in any case to have held documentary film in higher regard than newsreel. Yet there is a clear discrepancy between the French view of documentary film as ‘educational’ and ‘true’ during the Occupation and the way in which such films portrayed daily life. In this regard, the filmmakers could be said to have set out deliberately to mislead their audiences about life under Pétain, even if the audiences might have wanted to be distracted from the realities of the Occupation. This renders the process of explaining the motivations of these filmmakers all the more problematic; did they distort reality for a positive cause? Given that life under Vichy is consistently projected as positive in these films, it seems likely that these filmmakers sought to promote the regime, while also suggesting other, more complex motivations.

In the absence of concrete evidence, the actions of Touzé and Galey, who were involved with the production of *Une Page d’histoire*, are open to interpretation. It seems likely that these men realised the need to cater for the audience’s desire to escape reality, and thus ensured that their films reflected this wish, in contrast to the makers of radio and poster propaganda who benefited from less autonomy, and who perhaps catered more to the demands of their media through generally informing the audience of Vichy policies, while also, inevitably, misleading them. The men responsible for Vichy documentary could have realised the importance of maintaining themes which had been popular before the Occupation and sought to draw on these in their work as a means of offering reassurance that some aspects of what the audience might have considered ‘ordinary’ life continued. The *Marseillaise* and militaristic scenes in *Une Page d’histoire* also hint at French independence and might even have been considered a challenge to German dominance in France. That *Une Page d’histoire*, unlike films released in the first two years of the Occupation, were largely produced and released in the Occupied Zone as well as the ‘Free’ Zone would suggest that

such attempts to challenge German power would have represented a risk for the filmmaker. Galey's continued role, and his apparent autonomy, provides some support for the theory that these films were made without close supervision by either the Vichy leadership or the German authorities, but if there is a trace of *Vichyssois résistance* in *Une Page d'histoire*, it is one which, out of necessity, is extremely subtle.

Although *Une Page d'histoire* raises some important points about the complex motivations of those working for the Vichy authorities, it also underlines some complexities surrounding the wider ideals at work during the Occupation. If Galey, in particular, drew on themes which were popular before the war precisely because he believed they would be of interest to the audience of films he backed, then this might offer an insight into the wider mentalities of the French people. The Empire, the family, the army and national pride, which are the most common themes in 1944 films as they were in the first three years of the Occupation, might well have had the capacity to reassure the audience precisely because they were not necessarily political. What the precise nature of the themes promoted in Vichy documentary film over the four years of Occupation have to say about the wider motivations and interests of Vichy's functionaries must now be summarised in the final, concluding chapter to this thesis.

CONCLUSIONS

DOCUMENTARY production over the four years of Vichy rule and German Occupation was a remarkable feat. Produced in a context of shortages—of materials like film and petrol, of food, and even of film professionals—documentary films were nevertheless a staple part of the cinema experience in the dark years. Vichy documentary film is remarkable for the themes conveyed throughout the Occupation, for a largely consensual portrayal of life under Pétain, and for the curious and often unconventional career trajectories of the men and women called upon by the SGI to make these films, who showed outstanding dedication to their craft. Over four years, these films projected an image of France, and of the French, which was at odds with the political, economic and social realities of the Occupation.

Each of the films discussed in this thesis, in fact, features a version of life under Occupation in which France continued largely in the way it had before the dual upheaval of defeat and *exode* in June 1940. From the continuity of the Empire in Jean Coupan's *Dakar*, Yves Naintré's *Fidélité* and in *Méditerranée/Niger*, to the continuity of traditional family morals in *Le Jardin sans fleurs* and *Le Culte des héros*, and from the maintenance of a competent, physically and mentally strong French youth in *Jeunes de France* and *Chefs de demain*, to the on-going strength of the French military in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and *Une Page d'histoire*, Vichy documentary film across all four years of Occupation maintained themes which were commonplace before the creation of Pétain's state. These reminders of life before the disruption of the defeat and *exode* had the potential to offer some reassurance to the audience living in dark times. Each of these films portrayed ideals which were largely devoid of political interference, while also systematically ignoring themes which might otherwise have proved divisive, or which actually acknowledged the impact of the events of June 1940. Very few of the material hardships of the dark years are acknowledged in these films and when they do appear they are only touched upon fleetingly, as is the case with the absence of Prisoners of War and shortages of food in *Nourrir la France* and *Le Culte des héros* and with the impact of Allied bombing in *Une Page d'histoire*.

These films also employ broadly similar approaches and techniques which enable their directors to convey such a positive, and on the whole moderate, image of life under Occupation, in which the people who appear in the films appear largely content with their lot. The musical score is an important aspect of each of the documentaries, seemingly aimed at provoking a reaction amongst the audience, whether one of patriotic pride (as is certainly the case with the militaristic music of *Une Page d'histoire* and *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*) or one of affection (as is the case, for example, in the family-orientated films like *Le Culte des héros* and *Le Jardin sans fleurs*). Renditions of the *Marseillaise* in a variety of settings, but most often in conjunction with the appearance of Pétain or in the context of a military parade, as in *Une Page d'histoire*, *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and *Le Maréchal Pétain à Montluçon et à Commentry*, seem designed to provoke patriotic sentiment amongst the audience, while also acting as further evidence of the continuity of life from before the *exode*. The function of the narrator, who, in the case of the majority of the films was probably Jacques Breteuil, is also crucial in maintaining a positive and moderate image of life under Occupation; the audible pride of Breteuil when announcing French military achievements and strength in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion* and *Une Page d'histoire* also appears designed to incite the audience to share in this pride of continued French national and international standing. The juxtaposition between male and female narrator in *Le Jardin sans fleurs* reflects the use of music in the film, which appears designed to encourage the viewer to appreciate the importance of maternal values while also, through the male narrator, reinforcing the need for the country to actively reproduce to ensure that traditional family values can be continued in the future. The camera angles in the films are also broadly similar, notably in the documentaries which concern the Empire (namely *Dakar*, *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger*) which frequently position the white French military and civilian authorities in superior positions to local people, emphasising the continuity of French moral superiority in the form of the *mission civilisatrice* under Pétain.

There are, then, few significant differences between the content and approach of *Dakar* in 1940 and one of the very last films produced under the Occupation, *Une Page d'histoire*. The emphasis remains on reassuring the audience that French ways of life and French traditions continue as they did before the *exode*, drawing on themes which had the capacity to unite the majority of viewers behind this vision of life under Vichy and Occupation. Even the use of the Pétainist cult, whether the appearance of Pétain in person or a reference to his writings or speeches, generally in conjunction with scenes of military strength as in *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, or in the continuity of French engineering success as in *Méditerranée/Niger*, draw on a theme which was both broadly popular under the Occupation and indeed evoke the patriotic spirit from Verdun in 1916.¹ The absence of references to discriminatory measures, especially anti-Semitism but also measures introduced against Freemasons and Communists, can arguably be ascribed to the need to reassure audiences following the major upheaval and mass displacement of the *exode* and unite them behind the new government, since such measures were not subject to quite the same level of popular support as pro-family ideals or the Empire before the Occupation.

There are also, of course, other possible explanations for the consistent appearance of themes like the family, the Empire and French pride in documentary films produced, sanctioned, funded and commissioned by the Vichy authorities over the four years of Occupation. In line with the central research questions of the thesis, it is important to draw out here the reasons why documentary film was so different from other forms of propaganda. Documentaries appeared in the particular context of the cinema, which offered the benefits of warmth and distraction. It is clear that audiences flocked to the cinema to seek an escape from their everyday lives, which were in fact far harder than those which appear to be led by those French men and women that feature in Vichy documentary film, from the multi-talented mothers of *Le Culte des héros* to the farmers in *Nourrir la France*. Poster and radio propaganda were designed to be consumed in the course of their audience's

¹ See for example Michèle Cointet, pp.40-41

daily routines, not as part of the spectacle of the cinema. Vichy documentary films reflected the wider escapism of the cinema. Even if audiences were likely to choose to visit the cinema based not on the documentary but on the feature film, the makers of Vichy documentaries, and their supervisors, seem to have concluded that it was important to remain within the expectations of the cinema audience and thus promote an image of France under Occupation which was simultaneously reassuring and largely inaccurate. While it is important to note that reception to documentary films remains under-explored, the commercial success of films like *Fidélité* in particular suggest that these films matched the expectations of cinema-owners and possibly of the audiences when it came to making films which were suitable to be viewed in the escapist forum of the cinema.²

The escapism of the cinema must explain in part why documentary film consistently draws on themes from before the Occupation in its portrayal of life under Pétain, in contrast to radio and poster propaganda. With the notable exception of Castel's 1940 piece, poster propaganda consistently emphasised the distinctions between life before and after the defeat, promoting initiatives like the *Relève* and the *Milice* which were strongly connected to collaboration. Radio, meanwhile, frequently mentioned the one theme which documentary film so consistently avoided, namely anti-Semitism, while also repeatedly emphasising the importance of collaboration. With the arrival of Henriot at the head of the SGI in January 1944, the collaborationism and anti-Semitism of radio propaganda reached an all-time high, which contrasted steeply with the image of life under Occupation conveyed in *Une Page d'histoire*, for example, with its emphasis on the continuity of French strength under Pétain, with no apparent political or religious changes from before the Occupation.

Documentaries, like posters and radio, were forms of propaganda in line with the definition of the term set out in the introduction and chapter one; that is material which is designed to influence the actions and thoughts of the audience in the interests of the propagandist or their

² See Note from Eric Lagneau at Pathé to Galey, recording the ticket receipts for *Fidélité* in Lyon between 29th May and 6th June 1942, 18/06/1943, AN F41 92

masters. Yet documentaries were run very differently to radio and posters. Beyond the particular context of the cinema, with its capacity for distraction from everyday realities, documentaries were also different from radio and poster propaganda because the makers and supervisors of documentary film enjoyed far greater autonomy than those responsible for either radio or poster propaganda. The absence of significant intervention by senior Vichy figures, namely Darlan and Laval, in the daily running of documentary film serves to emphasise the scale of the autonomy enjoyed first by Tixier-Vignancour and de Carmoy and then by Galey. Indeed, the fact that one of the few interventions by Laval in the running of documentary production was to openly record his support for Galey,³ suggests that the Vichy leadership invested considerable trust in the man who, over three years from 1941 to 1944, was responsible for commissioning, sanctioning, funding and otherwise supporting Vichy documentary film. Like Tixier-Vignancour and de Carmoy, Galey appears to have been given some freedom by his superiors to recruit filmmakers as he saw fit. Unlike the makers of radio and poster propaganda, controlled by Laval loyalists in the final year of the Occupation, and even Henri Clerc, Galey's friend and colleague, who was involved in repeated arguments with the Propaganda Abteilung, and von Weyrauch in particular, over the content of *France-Actualités*, Galey was sufficiently autonomous to commission films like Masson's *Nourrir la France* and Touzé's *Une Page d'histoire*, both of which projected an independent vision of France that might have offered a challenge to the presence of the German occupiers. While Galey's management of the Direction du Cinéma seems to have come under financial scrutiny, as his correspondence with Thuillier records,⁴ and while he was obliged to obey the German command of July 1943 that documentaries no longer promote the Empire,⁵ he appears to have been under less direct pressure from Henriot or Laval than Clerc, or indeed Creyssel and Demaison of the poster and radio sections of the SGI.

³ See Kay Chadwick, p.17

⁴ See for example 'Rapport de M. Thuillier, Expert-Comptable à Monsieur l'Inspecteur des Finances, Directeur de l'Administration Générale,' 08/05/1943, AN F41 92

⁵ Memorandum of 23/07/1943, AN F41 83

Whereas Galey's relative autonomy, combined with the particular context of the cinema, offers some explanation for the appearance of themes from before the Occupation in Vichy documentary film, further explanation must be found in the motivations of Galey, his predecessors, and his filmmakers. Given the track records of the filmmakers whose work is discussed in this thesis, and indeed the history of their supervisors at the SGI, there is little to suggest that these men and women set out with the intention to undermine Pétain's state. Much primary evidence relating to documentary film production in this period was lost or destroyed—as recorded in the introduction to the *Archives nationales* catalogue for papers relating to the Ministère de l'Information: 'quelques pièces seulement demeurent de la section propagande documentaire'⁶—and this makes it difficult to know for certain the opinions of these filmmakers vis-à-vis the regime's leadership. But it seems likely that they shared at the very least the same support for the figure of Pétain as the wider population. Yet if these filmmakers appear not to have set out to undermine the popularity of the regime, to return to the central research questions of the thesis, were they actually serving the interests of Pétain's state, that is to say their 'masters,' or their own, as the 'propagandists,' or indeed both?

The preoccupations of these filmmakers were, superficially at least, very different. The collaborationist credentials of Touzé and Clerc, for example, would appear to put them at odds with the interests of the other filmmakers, whose attitudes towards collaboration are unknown. Nevertheless, these men and women were united through their passion for filmmaking, regardless of their actual ability, since for the most part they represented the only filmmakers that Tixier-Vignancour, de Carmoy and Galey had to hand; indeed, complaints about the quality of documentary production were recorded in a highly critical article in *Cinéma spectacle* in 1944 which lamented that 'les producteurs s'avèrent la plupart du temps très inférieurs à leur tâche.'⁷ This enthusiasm for filmmaking, though, placed these men and women in broadly similar social *milieux*, as liberal professionals. Indeed, if Clerc

⁶ Jean Mady, 'Introduction aux fonds « Information », ' AN F42, 1-37

⁷ *Cinéma spectacle*, 04/03/1944

and Touzé's support for collaboration was not shared by their colleagues, it nevertheless seems likely that they shared interests common to their social status. That each of their films promotes themes such as the Empire, the family and French patriotic standing demonstrates that these filmmakers espoused themes that had been popular amongst their peers, and amongst the French people, before the Occupation.

There were also more personal interests behind the decision of these men and women to turn their hand to documentary filmmaking under the Occupation; on the one hand, they gained prestige and expertise which the majority did not previously possess. On the other hand, filmmakers like Jean Coupan, director of *Dakar*, gained financially from taking on documentary film production and from promoting the ongoing importance of the Empire, with a considerable monthly salary increase of 13,000 francs per month as *Secrétaire-général* of *France-Actualités* in August 1942,⁸ while Jean Masson, who depicted the continuity of rural traditions in *Nourrir la France*, managed to leave for Morocco with around 90,963 francs from the SGI in 1943, in exchange for his work.⁹ An initiative of November 1941 ensured that those involved in documentary production could claim up to 3% of all box office receipts for their work,¹⁰ which would have reaped considerable rewards for the likes of Naintré, director of the commercially successful *Fidélité*, which grossed 15,219 francs in Lyon in just eight days between 29th of May and 6th of June 1942.¹¹ There were, then, certainly financial and professional reasons for the decisions by filmmakers to promote themes that had been popular before the Occupation, since through drawing on ideals shared by their audiences, these directors could ensure that their films proved to be sufficiently popular to enable them to receive a greater income.

The fact that Coupan, for example, was promoted to *secrétaire-général* of *France-Actualités* also demonstrates the support for themes like the Empire on the part of Tixier-Vignancour,

⁸ See minutes of the *France-Actualités* Conseil d'administration, 20/08/1942, AN F42 119

⁹ 'Rapport de M. Thuillier, Expert-Comptable à Monsieur l'Inspecteur des Finances, Directeur de l'Administration Générale,' 08/05/1943, AN F41 92

¹⁰ Letter to Galey, 21/11/1943, AN F41 83

¹¹ See Note from Eric Lagneau at Pathé to Galey, 18/06/1943, AN F41 92

de Carmoy and then Galey. As the immediate link between the filmmakers and the Vichy leadership, these men were directly responsible for approving the content of documentary film, and were sufficiently well-placed to understand the aims and ambitions of their superiors and their employees.

It is Galey, in particular, though, who seems to have stood the test of time at the head of the SGI's cinema section. Whereas de Carmoy and Tixier-Vignancour were replaced following the arrival of Marion, such was the trust placed in Galey that he departed only when all semblance of Vichy autonomy had vanished and when an Allied invasion seemed inevitable, as witnessed in the *synthèse* of the Prefect reports.¹² As a trusted member of the SGI leadership team, it is very likely that Galey would have had access to the same sources of information as the supervisors of radio propaganda, for example, who were able to compile a report on public perceptions of the radio based on the *synthèse* of Prefect reports, and which noted the detrimental effect of collaboration on audience reaction to the radio, namely that 'on rapproche [à la radio] d'être entièrement aux ordres des autorités d'occupation.'¹³ Arguably SGI figures like Galey were well aware that collaboration had been consistently recorded as the cause of uncertainty and malaise amongst the French public in the Prefect reports, and that audience reactions to newsreel reports on collaboration in *FAPG* and in *France-Actualités* were consistently negative. Indeed, such negative responses were in fact documented in the SGI's own publication *Filmafric* in the case of *FAPG*¹⁴ and discussed, in the case of *France-Actualités*, in correspondence between Galey himself and Clerc in October 1942.¹⁵ The absence of the theme of collaboration, in particular from documentaries sanctioned and commissioned by Galey, could then arguably be attributed to Galey's professional support for his immediate superiors in the Vichy regime, and therefore might suggest that Galey acted in the interests of the Vichy leadership, since overlooking such a theme avoided the potential detrimental impact on public opinion of Pétain's state.

¹² 'Synthèse des Rapports mensuels des Préfets (Zone nord et Zone sud), 15/02/1943, IHTP

¹³ See Report on radio propaganda, Undated, ca. November 1943, AN F41 59

¹⁴ *Filmafric*, *op cit*

¹⁵ Correspondence between Galey and Clerc, 23/10/1942, AN F42 119

This does not explain, however, the absence of other aspects of Vichy's ideals and policies, including, of course, anti-Semitism. Indeed, while the absence of references to collaboration in these films could be ascribed to Galey's support for the regime and willingness to avoid damage to public support for Vichy, the ignoring of other exclusionary measures is more surprising, and suggests other motivations. Merlin's *Le Jardin sans fleurs* and *Le Culte des héros*, dedicated entirely to the family, both ignore these initiatives through focussing on aspects of pro-family ideals that had been popular before the Occupation, but not necessarily those which were introduced under the auspices of the National Revolution, with the exception of the *allocations familiales*. There are also other aspects of Vichy documentaries which challenge the notion that Galey, along with de Carmoy and Tixier-Vignancour, the original architects of the Vichy cinema propaganda machine, and their filmmakers, set out exclusively to promote the ideals and interests of Pétain's state. In particular, the consistent emphasis on French military pride and patriotism in each of the films, whether in the form of French engineering triumphs as in *Méditerranée/Niger* or the presence of a capable and physically strong youth in *Jeunes de France*. Commencing with Coupan's *Dakar* and culminating in Touzé's *Une Page d'histoire*, while promoting the image of a strong and capable France under Pétain, these films nevertheless also projected an image of autonomy, and of future potential, that was at odds with the political realities in Vichy France. The inclusion of the *Marseillaise* scene at the Paris Hôtel de Ville in *Une Page d'histoire*, in particular, demonstrated French strength and independence in a capital city which was occupied and controlled by an absent German force, in a visible challenge to German supremacy, while there are also suggestions in *Chefs de demain*, *Troisième anniversaire de la Légion*, *Le Culte des héros* and indeed *Dakar*, *Fidélité* and *Méditerranée/Niger* that France would be militarily capable of overthrowing any challenges to her independence. To avoid explicit references to collaboration might be considered an attempt to promote the regime's interests; to emphasise French military capabilities and to openly challenge the concept of German rule in Paris, as in *Une Page d'histoire*, instead challenged the regime's

proximity to the occupying forces. While there is no suggestion in any of these films, least of all in *Une Page d'histoire*, a film dedicated primarily to promoting Pétain, of undermining the Marshal or his government, these films represented a clear challenge to the presence of the German occupiers which went beyond merely overlooking a potentially divisive topic. In the absence of concrete evidence, it remains uncertain as to whether these filmmakers were actively involved in Resistance movements, and indeed this would seem highly unlikely for the pro-collaboration Clerc and Touzé, but there were close links between the Direction du Cinéma and the makers of *La France en Marche*, including the *résistant* Jacques Berr, while Clément's later direction of *La Bataille du Rail* demonstrated some sympathy, if only post-war, for the Resistance. Yet the films of Coupan, Naintré, Este, Clément, Clerc, Touzé, Merlin and Masson all contributed, in their own ways, to a form of filmic *Vichyssois Résistance* which played up national pride and, in the case of Clément, Merlin and Touzé, in particular, challenged the presence of the occupiers.

There are also other aspects of these films which suggest that these documentaries were also produced with the interests of the filmmakers in mind. The nature of the themes which were such a strong part of the content of these documentaries—the family, the Empire, French national standing—was such that they were not explicitly linked to the specific time of the Occupation. Rather, the continuity with themes, and symbols like the *tricolore* and the *Marseillaise*, from before the Occupation brought attention to life before the upheaval of the *exode*, without any significant attachment to the political chaos and uncertainty of the Third Republic. There is no suggestion of support in any of the films examined in this thesis of a return to the political instability of the institutions of the Third Republic, but there is a suggestion in each that life before the *exode*, before upheaval, was one to be cherished. Themes like the family, the Empire and French patriotism, in the form of the army and the *tricolore* and *Marseillaise*, were not political in the same way as collaboration or anti-Semitism, and it was the support for these themes beyond the political sphere before the *exode*, especially amongst inter-war pressure groups, that allowed the directors of Vichy's

documentaries to suggest that there was no distinct break between one regime and another. Given that few of the makers of Vichy's documentary films had any connections to politics, with the exception of Tixier-Vignancour, Clerc and Touzé, the comparatively apolitical nature of these themes adds further weight to the argument that these filmmakers were working, in part at least, in their own interests through simply reflecting themes that appealed to them, and were likely to appeal to audiences fatigued by continual political change.

There are, then, three principal explanations for the consistent focus in Vichy documentary films on themes that had been the subject of support before the Occupation and which conveyed an image of life under Vichy that was more positive and less divisive than the political reality. The first is the context of the cinema, with its capacity for distraction, which might well have shaped the escapist approach to Vichy documentaries, especially the semi-fictional *Le Jardin sans fleurs*, *Le Culte des héros* and *Chefs de demain*. Secondly, the supervisors and makers of Vichy documentary film appear to have benefited from greater autonomy than those responsible for radio or poster propaganda, enabling SGI figures like Galey to commission documentaries as they saw fit, and to encourage filmmakers to pursue their own interests. Finally, the men and women behind Vichy documentary film had also lived and worked in the inter-war years, and their interests were likely to have been similar to the wider French population. It therefore seems likely that these filmmakers, and their supervisors, wished to convey their own attitudes and views through promoting themes like the family, the Empire and French military and engineering achievements, all of which demonstrated that France remained a strong, proud country, capable of defending herself as before the *exode*. These filmmakers did not make these films without reason; rather, they must have been aware that it was precisely these themes that had the greatest potential to reassure the French cinema-going public that France could return to her status as a great power on the world stage, while also possessing the ability to overthrow any challenges to such status.

By addressing the importance of the continuity in Vichy documentary film of themes from before the Occupation, the original contribution of this thesis has been to explore for the first time the differences in content and approach between documentary film and other propaganda, while also putting forward explanations for this phenomenon. It seems clear that far from uniformly supporting Vichy's ideals and policies, the men and women employed by the Vichy regime to make documentary film in fact believed that comparatively moderate themes like the family and the Empire—themes promoted in contemporary British documentaries—were of sufficient merit in their own right to promote them in their portrayal of life under Occupation. Although the recent historiography of the dark years has been shaped by the theme of anti-Semitism, as witnessed in recent work by, for example, Daniel Lee¹⁶ and Jacques Semelin,¹⁷ the absence of this theme in Vichy documentaries emphasises that Vichy's functionaries instead had different preoccupations, and identified other, less divisive themes, which they appear to have believed could best promote life under Pétain.

There are, though, aspects of Vichy propaganda film which merit further academic attention. The first is a greater examination of the differences between the promotion of life under Occupation in documentary film and that in newsreel film, which for reasons of space have only been explored briefly in this thesis. While it seems clear that Vichy newsreel promoted collaboration, and on one occasion promoted anti-Semitism, further work is needed to explore the extent to which newsreel also conformed to the expectations of cinema audiences in offering some form of escapism, while also reflecting the interests of those responsible for making newsreel film. The second is to examine in greater detail the reception of documentary film. Although exploring reception for every film would prove difficult, further archival research is necessary to find out whether, for example, there are differences in the way in which audiences in different locations reacted to these films, and

¹⁶ Daniel Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children: French Jewish Youth and the Vichy Regime, 1940-1942* (Oxford: OUP, 2014)

¹⁷ Jacques Semelin, *Persécutions et entraides dans la France occupée: comment 75% des Juifs en France ont échappé à la mort* (Paris: Seuil, 2014)

indeed whether they were at any point disrupted by the audience. The third is to explore whether the tendency in Vichy documentary propaganda to draw on themes which had been the subject of support in the past, but which were not strictly speaking political, and which therefore presented a more moderate image of an extreme-right, nationalist and exclusionary regime, was further developed by the French extreme-right in subsequent years. Was this a phenomenon exclusive to Vichy, or did later figures and parties on the French extreme-right follow similar approaches through using film as a medium with which to convey a more moderate approach than in other media? This thesis marks the first step in exploring how the medium of documentary film presents a more moderate image of the Vichy regime and its functionaries, through drawing on themes which had been the subject of widespread, though relatively apolitical, support in the past, while also throwing further light on the interests and motivations of a small group of dedicated filmmakers in the context of the Occupation. In so doing, it opens up new avenues into the historiography not only of the Vichy regime but also the wider French extreme-right.

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‘France-Actualités vous parle,’ in *France-Actualités*, 21/08/1942, INA AFE 85001011

‘Gala de la Police,’ in *France-Actualités*, 02/10/1942, INA AFE85001093

‘Le serment des chefs Musulmans,’ in *France-Actualités*, 09/10/1942, INA AFE85001101

‘Fin des vacances,’ in *France-Actualités*, 09/10/1942, INA AFE85001097/

‘L’extension du métro à Paris,’ 16/10/1942, INA AFE85001107

‘Réalizations coloniales en Afrique Occidentale Française,’ 30/10/1942, INA AFE85001141

1943

‘Le Maréchal Pétain visite un train du SIPEG,’ in *France-Actualités*, 01/01/1943, INA AFE00000253

‘La Corporation du meuble,’ in *France-Actualités*, 05/03/1943, INA AFE86001793

‘Les Kayaks sur la neige,’ in *France-Actualités*, 05/03/1943, INA AFE86001793

‘À la mosquée de Paris,’ in *France-Actualités*, 26/03/1943, INA AFE86001829

‘Nouveau bombardement à Rouen,’ in *France-Actualités*, 02/04/1943, INA AFE86001842

‘Cinq jours avec le Maréchal Pétain,’ in *France-Actualités*, 07/05/1943, INA AFE86001909

‘La Vie des jeunes travailleurs français en Allemagne,’ in *France-Actualités*, 16/07/1943,
INA AFE860002030

‘L’Exposition de la famille française,’ in *France-Actualités*, 22/10/1943, INA
AFE86002225

‘La Toussaint,’ in *France-Actualités*, 05/11/1943, INA AFE86002248

‘Exposition du tourisme,’ in *France-Actualités*, 12/11/1943, INA AFE86002280

‘Apprentissage des jeunes gens du STO,’ in *France-Actualités*, 12/11/1943, INA
AFE86002269

‘Les jeunes français du service du travail,’ in *France-Actualités*, 26/11/1943, INA
AFE86002297

1944

‘Discours de Philippe Henriot à Lille,’ in *France-Actualités*, 04/02/1944, INA
AFE860002456

‘Discours de Léon Degrelle au Palais de Chaillot,’ in *France-Actualités*, 10/03/1944, INA
AFE86002546

‘Avec les travailleurs français,’ in *France-Actualités*, 17/03/1943, INA AFE86002568

‘Bombardement de la région parisienne et de Rouen,’ in *France-Actualités*, 21/04/1944,
INA AFE 86002666

‘Le Maréchal Pétain à Paris,’ in *France-Actualités*, 28/04/1944, INA AFE86002676

‘Centième anniversaire de la naissance de Drumont,’ in *France-Actualités*, 12/05/1944, INA AFE86002696

‘La LVF sur le front de l’est,’ in *France-Actualités*, 26/05/1944, INA AFE86001997

‘Le Maréchal Pétain visite les environs de Paris,’ in *France-Actualités*, 26/05/1944, INA AFE86002717

‘Édition du 18 août 1944,’ in *France-Actualités*, 18/08/1944, INA AFE 86004392

France Libre Actualités

‘*Journal de la résistance*: la Libération de Paris,’ *France Libre Actualités*, 01/09/1944

Documentaries

Occupation era

France-Actualités vous parle (Dir: Henri Clerc, 1942)

Anniversaire (Dir: Unknown, probably Maurice Touzé, 1944)

Du blé en graine (Dir: Unknown, probably Maurice Touzé, 1944)

Une Page d’Histoire- les 88 ans de Pétain (Dir: Unknown, probably Maurice Touzé, 1944)

Voyage du Maréchal Pétain à travers la France (Dir: Unknown, probably Maurice Touzé, 1944)

Post-Occupation

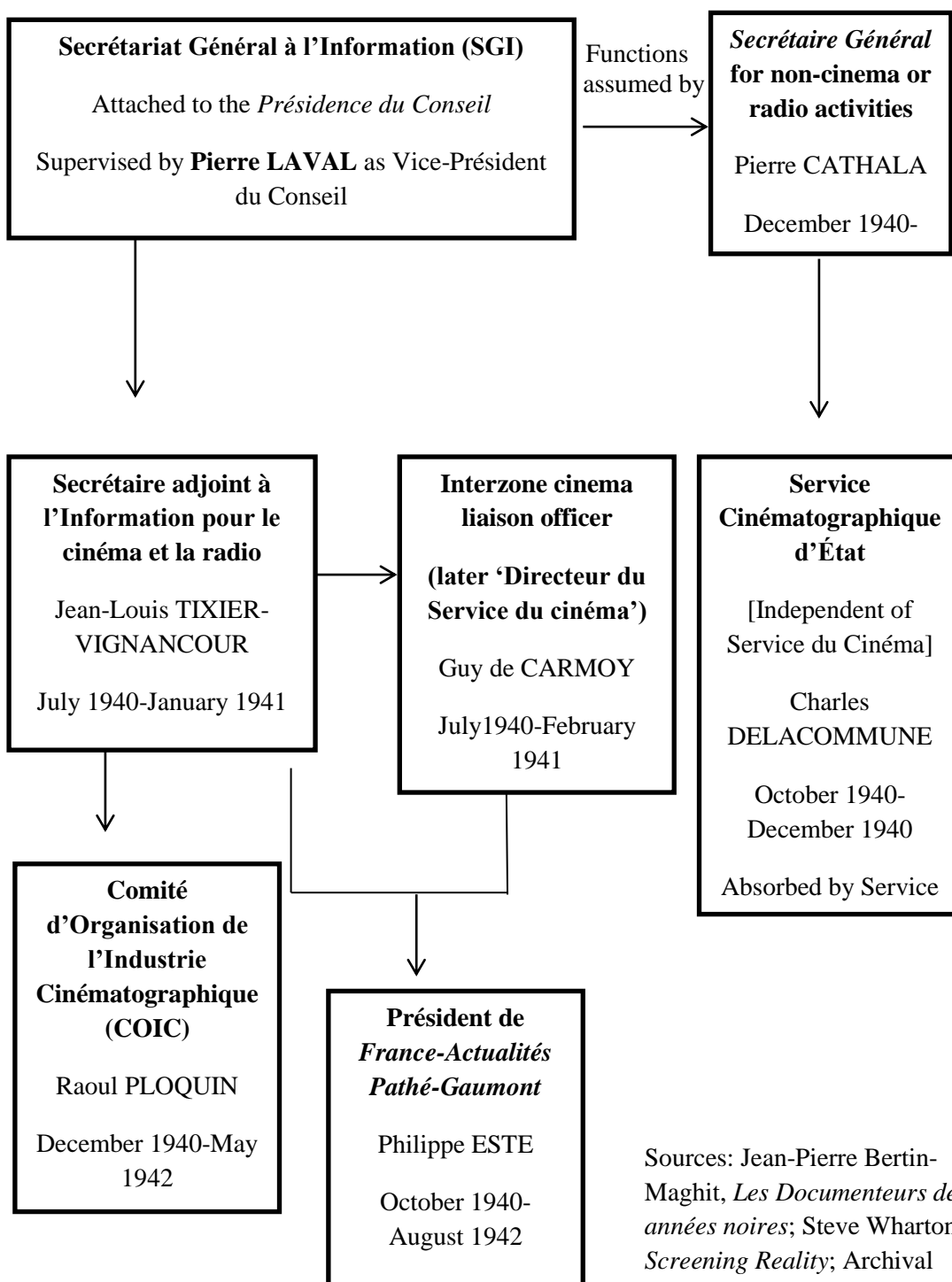
Images de Guerre 1940-1945 (Dir: Wieviorka, Bertin-Maghit and Lindeperg, 2002)

Appendix 1

Organisational structure of the Vichy Secrétariat Général à

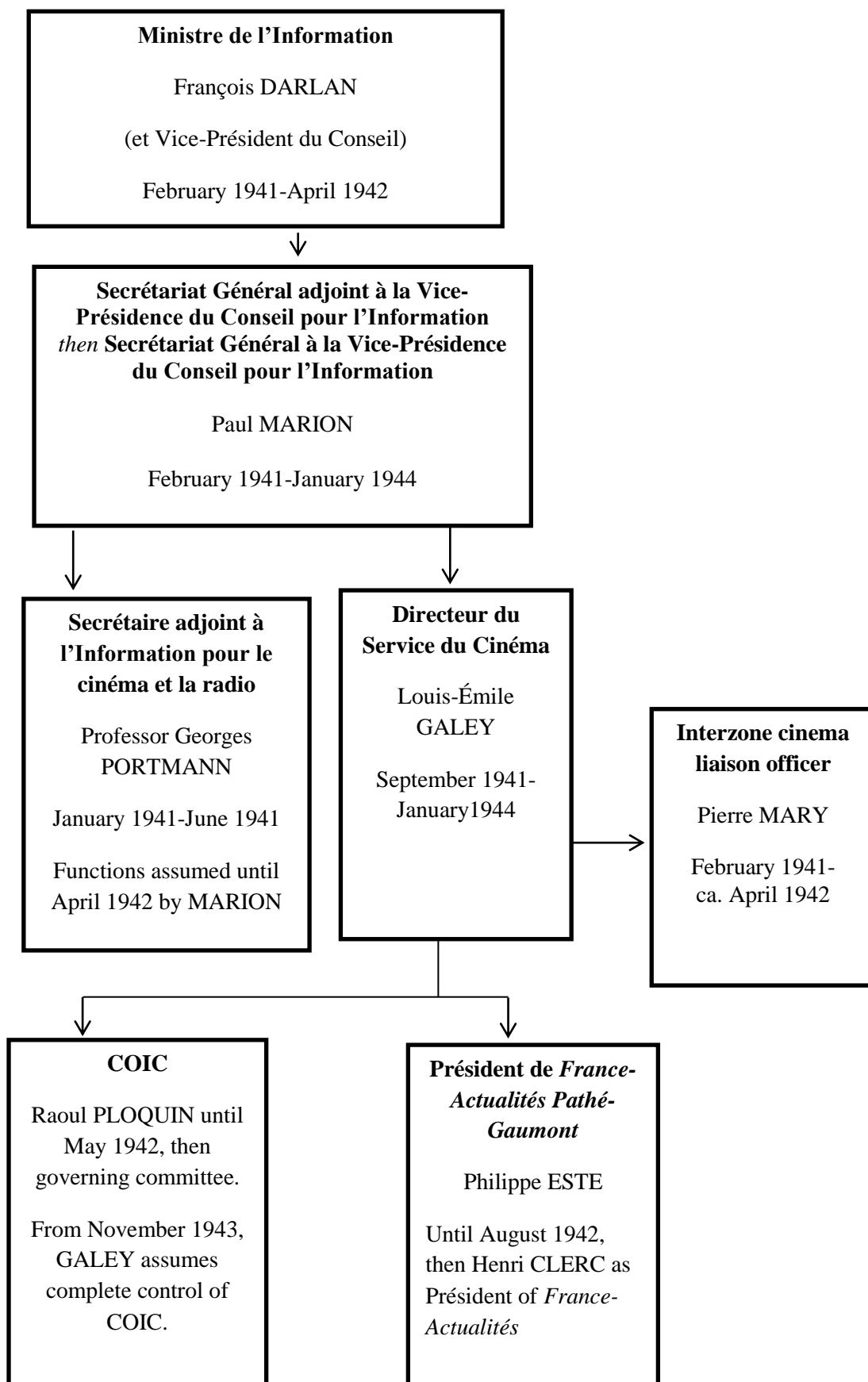
l'Information

1940-41

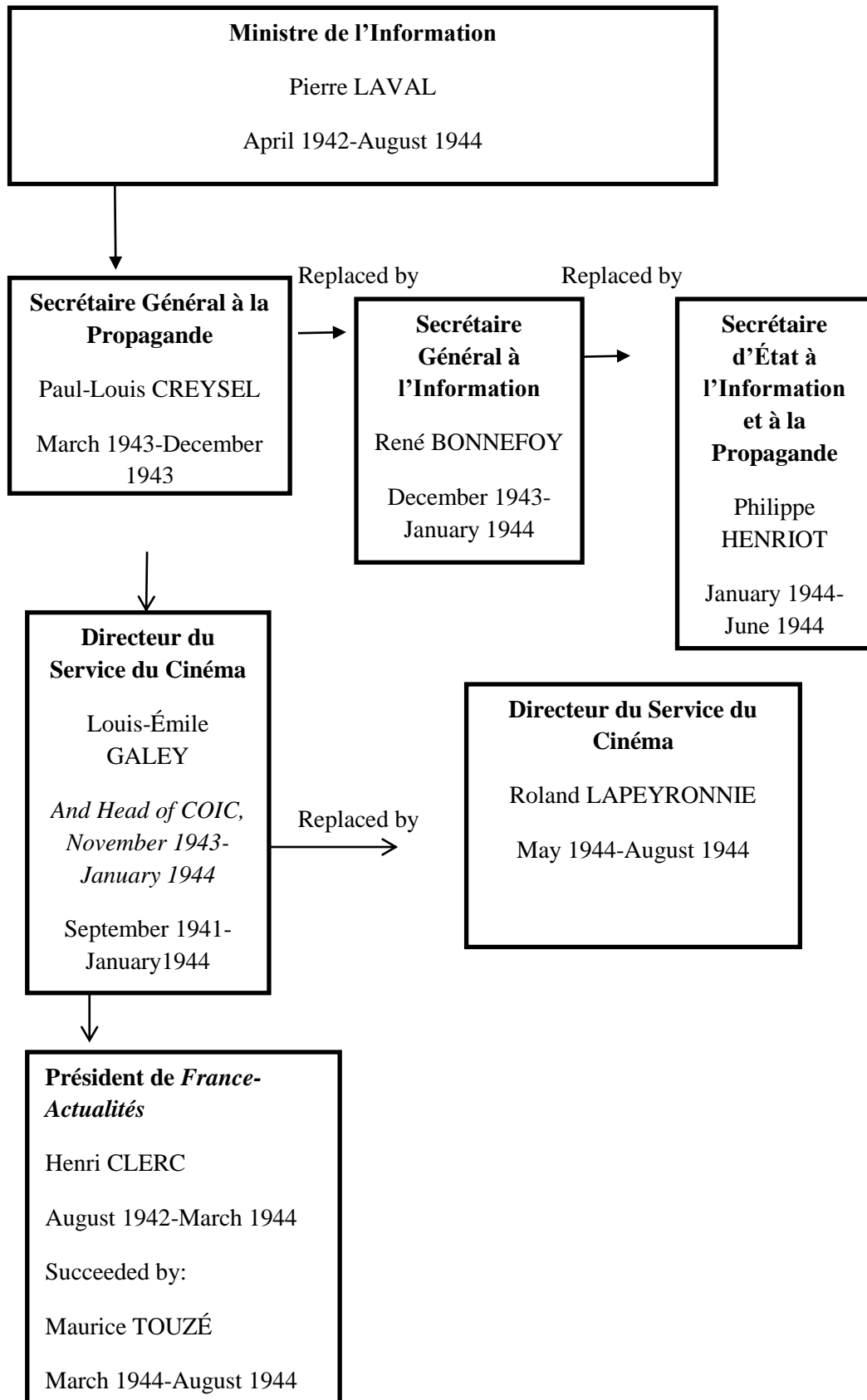


Sources: Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Les Documenteurs des années noires*; Steve Wharton, *Screening Reality*; Archival documents from AN F42 118 and AN F42 119

1941-42



1942-44



**Appendix 2: Archival holdings of documentary and newsreel film shown and produced
in France, 1940-1944**

Film genre	Dates of production	Archive location	Availability
Documentary film	June 1940-August 1944	Centre national de la cinématographie (CNC)	Consulted on site at the CNC Bois d'Arcy or at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Site François Mitterrand, Paris
Newsreel: <i>Actualités Mondiales</i> (German-produced)	7th August 1940–14 th August 1942	Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) located in the Mediathèque of the BnF, Site François Mitterrand, Paris	Can be consulted on site only by <i>bona fide</i> researchers in possession of a BnF reader card. Researchers must additionally subscribe to INA.
Newsreel: <i>France-Actualités Pathe-Gaumont</i> Also known as <i>Pathé Journal de Marseille</i> or the <i>Journal de Vichy</i> (French-produced)	30 th October 1940–26 th August 1942	Gaumont-Pathé Archives, Saint-Ouen, Paris	Can only be consulted by <i>bona fide</i> researchers at the Gaumont-Pathé archives.
Newsreel: <i>France Actualités</i>	21 st August 1942–18 th August 1944	Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (Details as under <i>Actualités Mondiales</i>)	See <i>Actualités Mondiales</i> above.